

Marked

Scripture and Background Information for August 20-26.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

Some of Jesus' last words, what we know as the great commission, provides us with a glimpse at His vision for what the life of a Christian disciple is meant to look like. Those who follow Jesus are supposed to be marked by certain qualities that are central to who we are as believers. As we reflect on Jesus' commission to us, let us take steps to live out these "MARCS" by being missional, accountable, reproducible, communal, and spiritual.

Background for Acts 8:26-40:

Our focus this week is on the communal aspect of being a disciple and a disciple maker. From Jesus' words in the great commission (Matthew 28:19-20), we see that baptism ends up being one of the most communal aspects of following Jesus. Baptism is a crucial step of obedience in the faith because it marks parts of our story that the rest of the world can't see. It doesn't save us, but it publicly represents the personal reality of salvation that we have received through our faith in Jesus. Therefore, baptism can be a great encouragement to other believers and be a way of sharing the gospel to those who don't yet know Christ.

Acts 8:26-40 highlights one of the most incredible accounts of baptism. The Ethiopian eunuch was a man of immense power and authority as a political official for the Ethiopian Queen. Then, after a divinely inspired encounter with Phillip, the Ethiopian placed his faith in Jesus and was baptized. Even though the story isn't explicit about it, the implications of this baptism were large because the Ethiopian would have had an entourage of people with him as he traveled, and his baptism would have been witnessed by all of them. We know from historical records that the Gospel spread throughout Africa in the early church years and still has a strong presence there today. Perhaps much of this was precipitated by this one man's decision to declare his faith publicly so that others might understand the gospel, too.

Insights and questions to engage with the text:

1. How does God use baptism to glorify Himself and spread His gospel to others?
2. How would you describe baptism and its significance to someone who isn't familiar with it?
3. Take some time to talk about personal experiences with baptism. If you have been baptized, what was that experience like? How can you continue to share your faith publicly today?
4. If you haven't been baptized, what is holding you back? How could God use your public declaration of faith to further His kingdom today?

*For those in your group who haven't been baptized be sensitive to insure the discussion does not feel heavy handed and encourage those who have genuine faith to consider following up to receive more info about baptism and the steps to take to do so.