



THE HEIGHTS

CHURCH

LIFE GROUP TEACHING PLANS
THE SIMPLEST WAY TO CHANGE THE WORLD
LESSON 3

THE SIMPLEST WAY TO CHANGE THE WORLD

FROM BARRIER TO BENEFIT: COMFORT

LESSON 3

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying Romans 12:1-2; John 4:9,27-35; and Joshua 1:9. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > **Series Theme Aim:** Loving our neighbors means choosing to engage rather than unplug, open rather than close, and initiate rather than sit idly.
- > **Biblical Emphasis:** God transforms our thinking about our comfort levels and goes with us where He calls us, so we can be courageous to initiate relationships with the neighbors we don't know.
- > **Teaching Aim:** Loving our neighbors means moving our comfort level from barrier to benefit.
- > **Memorize:** Joshua 1:9

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

DO NOT SKIP THESE

- 1 Share any additional progress you made this week learning names and filling in blank spaces on your block map. Provide a blank time assessment inventory for any group member who was not present last week (found on pg. 10).
- 2 Share any specific steps you took to create new margin so that you might be present in your neighborhood. If you took time to prayer walk through your neighborhood, describe that experience.
- 3 Whether you prayer walked through your neighborhood or not, what word best describes your feelings about participating in that activity: comfortable, uncomfortable, fearful, joyful, anxious, skeptical, something else? Explain.
- 4 Which would you say is a bigger barrier to you loving your actual neighbors in the way God is calling you to—time or comfort? Explain.
- 5 [Show this video of China's first glass-bottomed suspension bridge: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRlrs8hQNv0> or give a description of the bridge]

The suspension bridge in that video is 980 feet long and hangs almost 600 feet above a valley in China's Hunan Province. Who wants to go? Would you cross that bridge only if you absolutely had to get to the other side? Would you cross it if you were in a competition and money was involved? Or maybe you would cross it for the adventure of it, for the Instagram photo, or for some other reason?

Notes:

Bridges exist to form connections between two locations. We would not need bridges if there were no separation, no gap in between our destinations. As followers of Jesus, we're called to build bridges—only the bridges we are to build connect people to real relationships with Jesus. This is a worthwhile investment. It might feel a little bit unsettling and scary at first, but still we build those bridges because, without them, people remain separated forever from God. We've discussed time as an obstacle to building bridges. This week, we'll look at comfort and fear as obstacles to building bridges with our actual neighbors.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Ask a volunteer to read John 4:9,27-35.

- What stands out to you about the bridge Jesus built with the Samaritan woman?
- What attitudes or obstacles kept Jesus' disciples as observers rather than participants in Jesus' bridge-building in this passage?
- What obstacles of comfort or fear did the woman have to courageously confront in order to build a bridge from the townspeople to Jesus?

Most Jews would've preferred if someone had built a bridge over the whole of Samaria so they could avoid it altogether. The usual route for the Jews was to go around Samaria, because they viewed Samaritans as unclean. But Jesus didn't do that—He went through Samaria. Not only that, but Jesus also took His time there. He didn't speed through Samaria as fast as He could; He sat down by a well and sent His disciples into the city to buy food. While they were gone, a woman showed up at the well, and Jesus built a bridge by asking her to give Him a drink of water. He might have been physically thirsty, but more than that, He knew she had a spiritual thirst that He alone could quench.

Notes:

- What would you say is your biggest comfort or fear that keeps you from investing in your actual neighbors? How does Jesus' approach to people speak to you about that?

Our neighbors are going to all kinds of wells looking to quench their thirst, and they are coming up empty. We must identify and move past our uncomfortableness and intentionally reach out,. Whether people present themselves like they have it all together or it's obvious that their lives are a mess, everybody needs Jesus. Bridge building opportunities surface every day as we interact with people God has placed us around. The Holy Spirit compels us to go to the lost. But we have to take some risks.

> Ask a volunteer to read Romans 12:1-2.

- What kinds of sacrifices did God's people offer in the past? What was Paul's basis for teaching something new with regard to sacrifice?

The common understanding in Paul's day was that only the first and best animals were fit to be offered as sacrifices. The sacrifice Paul had in mind was radically different. Jesus gave Himself as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin on the cross. Believers are to live in light of Jesus' all-sufficient sacrifice, bringing glory to God.

- What comforts might you need to sacrifice in order to love your actual neighbors?

Notes:

Our spiritual worship involves offering our whole lives to God. The only way we can navigate this life in a manner that pleases God is by the mercy of God. We must release control along with our own agendas, comforts, and fears, and surrender to that which God has purposed in and for us.

- When it comes to your approach to neighbors, what does conformity to the pattern of the world look like?
- Do you ever find God's way less appealing than the world's? Why or why not?
- What did Paul say to do instead of conforming? Through what process does transformation happen in Christ-followers? How is this study helping you with that so far?

Feeling overwhelmed with the call to be different than other people and intentionally reach out to your neighbors? Good news! Paul did not say, "Go transform yourselves!" Rather, he said to be transformed. Transformation starts with our minds. God's Holy Spirit changes us from the inside out, and only as He changes us can we know and do what He considers to be holy and pleasing. We renew our minds and move from barrier to benefit through continual, daily relationship with God, time in His Word, thinking on Him, meditating on the gospel, and memorizing Scripture. As we are filled with the Word, our minds change, and in turn our desire to live out our God-given responsibility to actively grow His Kingdom changes.

> Ask a volunteer to read Joshua 1:9.

- In what ways can you relate Joshua leading Israel across the sea into pagan territory to you crossing the street to invest in your neighbors?
- What was the source of courage God gave Joshua? Why is this the source of courage that we also need to love our neighbors?
- What must you believe to be true about God if you are going to move past your comforts and love your neighbors with courage?

Notes:

As we grow in our love for God and our depth of knowledge and love for His Word, we will identify the comforts and fears that keep us from investing in our neighbors, and we will follow Him with deeper and deeper levels of courage. God will never leave us. When we enter the places He has called us to, we can obey Him with courage knowing that He is right there with us.

Notes:

NEXT STEPS

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- 1 What thoughts do you need to invite the Holy Spirit to transform in you this week so that you can build bridges with your neighbors?

DO NOT SKIP THESE

- 2 As a group, help each other identify some practical ways you can overcome your comforts and fears of interacting with neighbors you don't know.
- 3 Challenge group members to dedicate the ten minutes they set aside last week to praying that God will enable them to overcome the comfort or fear keeping them from investing in their neighbors.

PRAY

Thank God for His active presence and transformative power in your life. Pray that He would make The Heights a people who overcome barriers to invest in their neighbors. Ask Him to give you courageous obedience to all that He has called you.

Notes:

FOR NEXT WEEK

- > **REMINDE**: Before you dismiss, remind group members to read Hebrews 10:24; Genesis 1:26,31-2:2; and Esther 4:14.
- > **EMAIL**: Midway through the week, send a reminder email with the following information
 - Read Hebrews 10:24; Genesis 1:26,31-2:2; and Esther 4:14.
 - Think through these questions before we get together again: 1) Which area of your block map stretches you outside your comfort zone the most? 2) Have you prayed God would allow you to overcome the comfort or fear keeping you from investing in your neighbors?

Time Assessment Inventory

PREVIOUS 7 DAYS

Day 1: Date _____ How I Spent My Time:
Day 2: Date _____ How I Spent My Time:
Day 3: Date _____ How I Spent My Time:
Day 4: Date _____ How I Spent My Time:
Day 5: Date _____ How I Spent My Time:
Day 6: Date _____ How I Spent My Time:
Day 7: Date _____ How I Spent My Time:

UPCOMING 7 DAYS

Day 1: Date _____ How I Will Spend My Time:
Day 2: Date _____ How I Will Spend My Time:
Day 3: Date _____ How I Will Spend My Time:
Day 4: Date _____ How I Will Spend My Time:
Day 5: Date _____ How I Will Spend My Time:
Day 6: Date _____ How I Will Spend My Time:
Day 7: Date _____ How I Will Spend My Time:

JOHN 4:9,27-35

4:9. About noon, the woman came to the well, telling us that she was clearly a social outcast, since that hot hour would have been an unlikely time to lug a heavy water jar back into the city.

Notes:

4:27. The disciples' amazement that Jesus was talking with a woman stemmed from the common Jewish teaching that talking too much to a woman, even one's wife, was a waste of time, diverting one's attention from the study of Scripture and reflection on God.

4:28. The woman's water jar was probably a large earthenware pitcher carried on the shoulder or hip. She abandoned her original purpose for coming to the well in order to tell her townspeople about Jesus.

4:29. Who told me everything I ever did was an exaggeration—but understandable in light of her excitement.

4:31. Rabbi, eat something reflected the disciples' customary concern for their Master's well-being. Jesus had been worn out from His journey before His conversation with the Samaritan woman. He still had not had anything to eat.

4:32-34 .The accomplishment of Jesus' mission was more important to Him than physical food (Mt 6:25; Mk 3:20-21). His statement may echo Dt 8:3 (cp. Mt 4:4; Lk 4:4).

4:35. In agriculture there is always a considerable separation in time between sowing and harvesting. The disciples needed to realize that with the coming of Jesus, sowing (preaching) and reaping (conversions) coincided. The immediate reference may be to the approaching Samaritans (vv. 39-42).

ROMANS 12:1-2

12:1. Paul urged all believers to present themselves as a living sacrifice. Jesus had given Himself as the once-and-for-all Sacrifice for sin on the cross. Believers thus were to live in light of Jesus' all-sufficient sacrifice, bringing glory to God. Paul further explained that living as a holy, pleasing sacrifice was a believer's spiritual worship. Paul taught that in light of God's gracious redemption (by the mercies of God), living as a sacrifice was the logical and pleasing way for Christians to serve God.

Notes:

12:2. As Christians, we're also to please God with our minds. The temptation is to go along with the dominant attitudes of the age, to adopt the prevailing cultural worldview characterized by self-worship (sin). The apostle urged his readers to reject worldliness and to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. Transformation of our thinking and attitudes is an ongoing, lifelong endeavor. The result of having our minds renewed by the Spirit is to grow in our ability to discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. The word translated discern literally means to prove by testing. God wants His people to know what pleases Him because by living according to His ways we will experience the most abundant life possible (see John 10:10).

JOSHUA 1:9

Two more references to the instruction affirm the key importance of God's revelation. Study and learning of it are to form so much a part of one's life that the words are fully obeyed as in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. The "frame" of God's promised presence in Joshua 1:5,9 indicates that Joshua's success will come because God is with him, enabling him to read and observe God's word (Eph. 2:8-10).