



session 9 group study guide

the death of Christ

message

Read the following account of Jesus' death as told in Mark 15:33-47. As you read, keep the following questions in mind: (1) What is the significance of what Jesus says on the cross? (2) What might the disciples, Jesus' friends, and His mother, Mary, be thinking as these events unfold?

At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "listen, he's calling Elijah."

One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid (Mark 15:33-47).

dig

1. It is incredible how God took the darkest moment in world history and turned it into the greatest demonstration of love and hope the world has ever known. According to Mark 15:34, “Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (see also Psalm 22:1). Why do you think He said this? What did He mean by these words?

2. Why do you suppose the Roman centurion made the statement recorded in Mark 15:39?

3. Using your imagination, write out a few thoughts on what the following people in verse 40 might have been doing or talking about at this time:

Jesus’ mother

Jesus' disciples

Jesus' friends

4. So, why did Christ have to die? Look at the following verses to discover and explore the purpose of Christ's death on the cross. After each section of Scripture, write down your understanding of why Christ had to die.

John 3:16

Romans 5:6-8

Hebrews 9:23-29

Galatians 3:10-14

1 Peter 3:18

apply

Because Jesus Christ sacrificed His life on the cross, we have the opportunity to be set free from our sins and be called children of God. Jesus Christ had to bear the sins of the world to bridge the gap between the holiness of God and the sinfulness of humankind. There are two theological words that we use when we talk about the death of Jesus—justification and atonement.

justification

Justification means “to be made right.” An easy way to remember this is to think of it as “just as if I’d never sinned.” It refers to our relationship with God. Because of Christ’s death, we can be made right with God.

1. Read Galatians 2:16. How do we get this justification?

2. As believers, we are justified and righteous before God not because of our good works but because of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Read Romans 5:1. What is the result of being justified in Christ?

atonement

Atonement means “to cover or pardon.” This is another way of saying that our sins are forgiven. Christ paid the price of death in order for our debt of sin to be canceled. Our atonement as believers means that our guilt and sin have been removed. Christ’s death on the cross (the shedding of blood) took the place of our spiritual death and set us free.

1. In the Old Testament, people lived under obedience to the Mosaic Law. Read Leviticus 17:11. How were the people to atone for their sins?

2. According to Leviticus 5:18, what kind of sacrifice was to be made?

3. The Day of Atonement was one of the major religious days of the year in Old Testament times. Read Leviticus 16:29-34. How did the Israelites celebrate this day?

4. Because of Christ's death, we are no longer in bondage to the Old Testament law of atonement. His death stands as a sacrifice of atonement for all of our sins. According to 1 Peter 2:24, why did God do this?

5. Read Colossians 1:19-22. According to this passage, how does God now view us?

reflect

1. What would be different if Christ hadn't died for our sins?

2. How does it feel to know that God loved you enough to sacrifice His own Son?

3. Which of the following would be the hardest for you to sacrifice for God? Circle your top three.

friends
house
health
money

car
cell phone
talents
music

family
future plans
girlfriend/
boyfriend

4. What should our response be to God in light of His great love for us?

5. Is the death of Jesus a reality in your life? If so, how has it had an impact on you? If not, what can you do in order for the death of Christ to become relevant to your life?

6. What does Ephesians 2:8-9 tell us about the death of Christ? Why is this verse so important to remember?

meditation



For God so loved the world that he gave his one
and only Son, that whoever believes in him
shall not perish but have eternal life.

JOHN 3:16

Note

1. Adapted from Edward R. Bloomquist, M.D., "No Guts, No Glory," *Breakaway*, April 1992, pp. 21-22.