

At the Crossroads

How will you respond to the cross today?

Time:

15-20 minutes

Focus:

God's Love, Life of Jesus,
The Cross

Scriptures

1 John 4:9-12

Mark 15:6-32

Luke 23:39-43

Mark 15:31-47

Mark 16:1-16,

Romans 5:6-8

Parking lot

Write down distracting thoughts here:



Settle in

Take a deep breath. Turn off notifications on your phone. Ask God to show you what Jesus's sacrifice on the cross means for you personally and to help you respond to it with faith and boldness today.



Scripture reflection

Read this passage slowly. Circle, underline, or write down any words that stand out to you. What does this teach you about Jesus and his death on the cross? What does it teach you about God?

1 John 4:9-12 NCV

This is how God showed his love to us: He sent his one and only Son into the world so that we could have life through him. This is what real love is: It is not our love for God; it is God's love for us. He sent his Son to die to pay for our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us that much, then we also ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God, but if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love in us becomes what it should be.



Thought starter

When we read through the story of Jesus's journey to the cross, we see that the love and power of God can change even the most numb, unbelieving, or bitter heart. We don't earn this love, but we choose every day how we will respond to it. That choice determines whether we will walk closely with God or distance ourselves from him.



Here's what we'll learn in this Quick Quiet Time:

- We can learn about ourselves and our heart responses to the cross by looking at the people who were physically there when Jesus died and rose again.
- Being honest about our hearts' response to the cross is the first step toward closeness to God.
- Even when we respond to the cross with doubt or fear, God won't give up on us. He has a mission for us, and he won't abandon us.



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Notes:

 The crowd: Am I rejecting Jesus to fit in?

The context: Because of his influence, Jesus was arrested by the religious leaders and brought to the governor Pilate to be killed.

Mark 15:6-15 NCV

Every year at the time of the Passover the governor would free one prisoner whom the people chose. [7] At that time, there was a man named Barabbas in prison who was a rebel and had committed murder during a riot. [8] The crowd came to Pilate and began to ask him to free a prisoner as he always did. [9] So Pilate asked them, "Do you want me to free the king of the Jews?" [10] Pilate knew that the leading priests had turned Jesus in to him because they were jealous. [11] **But the leading priests had persuaded the people to ask Pilate to free Barabbas, not Jesus.** [12] Then Pilate asked the crowd again, "So what should I do with this man you call the king of the Jews?" [13] They shouted, "Crucify him!" [14] Pilate asked, "Why? What wrong has he done?" But they shouted even louder, "Crucify him!" [15] **Pilate wanted to please the crowd**, so he freed Barabbas for them. After having Jesus beaten with whips, he handed Jesus over to the soldiers to be crucified.

The lesson: The "crowd" will eventually reject Jesus.

- The crowd was easily swayed and influenced. They weren't thinking for themselves. This led them to reject Jesus.
- Pilate rejected Jesus because he wanted crowd approval.
- One of the biggest "crowds" we face today is social media, where people get easily swept up in emotion, the voices of influencers, and popular opinion.
- If we just follow what everyone else is doing, we will end up rejecting Jesus and doing whatever the crowd tells us.

**Reflect**

- Where in your life do you feel the pressure to just "go along with the crowd" instead of standing up for what is right?

 The crowd: Am I rejecting Jesus to fit in?**Mark 15:16-20 NCV**

The soldiers took Jesus into the governor's palace (called the Praetorium) and called all the other soldiers together. [17] They put a purple robe on Jesus and used thorny branches to make a crown for his head. [18] They began to call out to him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" [19] The soldiers beat Jesus on the head many times with a stick. They spit on him and made fun of him by bowing on their knees and worshipping him. [20] After they finished, the soldiers took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him out of the palace to be crucified.

Notes:

Mark 15:22-26 NCV

They led Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means the Place of the Skull. [23] The soldiers tried to give Jesus wine mixed with myrrh to drink, but he refused. [24] The soldiers crucified Jesus and divided his clothes among themselves, throwing lots to decide what each soldier would get. [25] It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified Jesus. [26] There was a sign with this charge against Jesus written on it: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

The lesson: The soldiers mocked and hurt Jesus casually, without caring about who he really was.

- The soldiers went right on with their daily business—gambling for clothes—while the most important event in history happened right in front of them.
- We can know all about the cross but live completely unchanged.

**Reflect**

- What are some ways I have treated God casually instead of caring about how I am making him feel?

**Simon: Does following Jesus feel heavy?****Mark 15:21 NCV**

A man named Simon from Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was coming from the fields to the city. The soldiers **forced** Simon to carry the cross for Jesus.

The lesson: Sometimes the burdens we don't choose end up leading us to God.

- Simon was forced to carry the cross. Sometimes we feel forced to carry heavy burdens we didn't choose or ask for.
- But this burden led him to Jesus.
- When our burdens feel heavy, looking to Jesus and understanding who he is will make them lighter.

**Reflect**

- What is a heavy burden or "cross" you are currently carrying? How can you look to Jesus while carrying it?

**The criminals: Is my suffering making me more grateful or more bitter?****Mark 15:27-28,32 NCV**

They also put two robbers on crosses beside Jesus, one on the right, and the other on the left. [28] [And the Scripture came true that says, "They put him with criminals."] [32] ... The robbers who were being crucified beside Jesus also insulted him.

Notes:

Luke 23:39-43 NCV

One of the criminals on a cross began to shout insults at Jesus: "Aren't you the Christ? Then save yourself and us." [40] But the other criminal stopped him and said, "You should fear God! You are getting the same punishment he is. [41] We are punished justly, getting what we deserve for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong." [42] Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." [43] Jesus said to him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

The lesson: We can choose how we respond to suffering. We can blame and insult God, or we can humbly seek to be close to him.

Both criminals were suffering the consequences of their own choices. But one was bitter about it while the other chose humility.

**Reflect**

- When hard times hit, does my heart tend to blame God, or do I reach out to him for grace and mercy?

**The religious leaders: Do I see my need for Jesus?****Mark 15:31-32 NCV**

The leading priests and the teachers of the law were also making fun of Jesus. They said to each other, "He saved other people, but he can't save himself. [32] If he is really the Christ, the king of Israel, let him come down now from the cross. When we see this, we will believe in him." The robbers who were being crucified beside Jesus also insulted him.

The lesson: Being religious can actually blind us.

- We can know all the rules and scriptures perfectly, but completely miss the relationship with God standing right in front of us.

**Reflect**

- Is my faith based on rules and pride, or is it based on a real, humble relationship with Jesus?

**The army officer: Will I let God's love soften my heart?**

Notes:

Mark 15:33-39 NCV

At noon the whole country became dark, and the darkness lasted for three hours. [34] At three o'clock Jesus cried in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani." This means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" [35] When some of the people standing there heard this, they said, "Listen! He is calling Elijah." [36] Someone there ran and got a sponge, filled it with vinegar, tied it to a stick, and gave it to Jesus to drink. He said, "We want to see if Elijah will come to take him down from the cross." [37] Then Jesus cried in a loud voice and died. [38] The curtain in the Temple was torn into two pieces, from the top to the bottom. [39] When the army officer who was standing in front of the cross saw what happened when Jesus died, he said, "This man really was the Son of God!"

The lesson: The cross can soften even the hardest heart.

- Even the tough, hardened army officer centurion finally had his eyes opened.
- He had supervised the soldiers who beat and crucified Jesus. But when he saw how Jesus died, he recognized who Jesus really was and understood what was happening.
- We are never too far from God. The massive temple curtain tore open, showing that we now have direct access to God. This is what Jesus wanted and what he died for us to experience.

**Reflect**

- What does it mean to me personally that Jesus experienced separation from the Father so that I would never have to be alone?

**The women and Joseph of Arimathea: Am I following Jesus boldly?****Mark 15:31-32 NCV**

Some women were standing at a distance from the cross, watching; among them were Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph. (James was her youngest son.) [41] **These women had followed Jesus in Galilee and helped him.** Many other women were also there who had come with Jesus to Jerusalem. [42] This was Preparation Day. (That means the day before the Sabbath day.) That evening, [43] **Joseph from Arimathea was brave enough to go to Pilate and ask for Jesus' body.** Joseph, an important member of the Jewish council, was one of the people who was waiting for the kingdom of God to come. [44] Pilate was amazed that Jesus would have already died, so he called the army officer who had guarded Jesus and asked him if Jesus had already died. [45] The officer told Pilate that he was dead, so Pilate told Joseph he could have the body. [46] Joseph bought some linen cloth, took the body down from the cross, and wrapped it in the linen. He put the body in a tomb that was cut out of a wall of rock. Then he rolled a very large stone to block the entrance of the tomb. [47] And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw the place where Jesus was laid.

The lesson: We can choose to be courageous, even when we are afraid.

Notes:

- Our fear can hold us back from responding to the cross and following Jesus.
- All of the other disciples except John had deserted Jesus because they were afraid.
- The women followed Jesus quietly but faithfully. Joseph stepped up courageously right when everything seemed lost.
- We, too, can choose to be courageous in how we respond to the cross.



Reflect

- In what area of my life is Jesus asking me to step out of my comfort zone and be bold for him right now?
- How can fear hold me back from responding to the cross?



Mary Magdalene: Do I look at my future with the faith that anything is possible?

Mark 15:31-32 NCV

The day after the Sabbath day, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought some sweet-smelling spices to put on Jesus' body. [2] Very early on that day, the first day of the week, soon after sunrise, the women were on their way to the tomb. [3] They said to each other, "Who will roll away for us the stone that covers the entrance of the tomb?" [4] Then the women looked and saw that the stone had already been rolled away, even though it was very large. [5] The women entered the tomb and saw a young man wearing a white robe and sitting on the right side, and they were afraid. [6] But the man said, "**Don't be afraid.** You are looking for Jesus from Nazareth, who has been crucified. He has risen from the dead; he is not here. Look, here is the place they laid him. [7] Now go and tell his followers and Peter, 'Jesus is going into Galilee ahead of you, and you will see him there as he told you before.'" [8] The women were confused and shaking with fear, so they left the tomb and ran away. They did not tell anyone about what happened, because they were afraid.

The lesson: The empty tomb is proof that death, sin, and fear do not have the final say.

- God's power brought Jesus back to life. That's why his followers didn't need to be afraid.
- He was going ahead of them, and he was stronger than any obstacle that could come their way.



Reflect

- When I realize that Jesus is alive today, how does that change the way I look at my fears and my future?

Notes:

 The disciples: Am I living out God's purpose for me?
Mark 15:31-32 NCV

When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. [10] She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. [11] When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, **they did not believe it.** [12] Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. [13] These returned and reported it to the rest; **but they did not believe them either.** [14] Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; **he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe** those who had seen him after he had risen. [15] **He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel** to all creation. [16] Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

The lesson: Jesus directly confronted doubt and stubbornness, but he didn't abandon his followers.

- The disciples faith was a journey; they struggled to believe and respond, just like we do sometimes. But in the end, they changed countless lives and even died for Jesus.
- God trusts us like he trusted his disciples to live out his mission.

**Reflect**

- Who is one person in my life who needs to hear the good news of God's love and hope this week?

Next steps

The cross shows us that Jesus doesn't shame our weakness; he transforms it. Check out the story of Peter, one of the closest friends of Jesus, and how he responded to the cross in our Quick Quiet Time called ["The Courage of Emotional Honesty: Lessons from the life of Peter."](#)

Next steps**Mark 15:31-32 NCV**

When we were unable to help ourselves, at the right time, Christ died for us, although we were living against God. [7] Very few people will die to save the life of someone else. Although perhaps for a good person someone might possibly die. [8] But God shows his great love for us in this way: Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

Jesus died to save the life of everyone we read about—even those who mocked and rejected him.

Let's reflect on who we relate to most so that our hearts can find their way back to Jesus.

Notes:

Who am I in the story of the cross?

- **The crowd** — rejecting Jesus to fit in.
- **The soldiers** — mocking him or just not caring.
- **Simon** — forced to carry a heavy burden.
- **The criminals** — one blaming Jesus, one asking for grace.
- **The army officer** — finally seeing the truth clearly.
- **The religious leaders** — proud, critical, and blind.
- **The women** — faithful, even when they were afraid.
- **Joseph** — bold and courageous when it counts.
- **Mary Magdalene** — transforming from fear to faith.
- **The disciples** — doubtful, but ready to change.

Closing prayer

Take a few minutes to talk to God about where your heart is today. Ask Him to help you move away from indifference or pride, and guide you into a life of bold, faithful devotion to a relationship with God.

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