

TALK IT OVER

CROSS TO CROWN

PART 3 | 6 APRIL 2025

NOTES TO LEADERS

The key objectives this week are to:

1. Help your group reflect on the suffering Jesus endured, what it means for us, and how we live in response.
2. Encourage your group to invite friends or family to the Easter services.

SCRIPTURES

MATTHEW 27:26-37

But [Pilate] had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

27 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers round him. 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head.

They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. 'Hail, king of the Jews!' they said. 30 They spat on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. 31 After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

33 They came to a place called Golgotha (which means 'the place of the skull'). 34 There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it.

35 When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. 36 And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. 37 Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

1 PETER 2:21

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

START TALKING

1. What stood out to you from Sunday's message? What challenged you or encouraged you?
2. What has God been doing in your world - what can we celebrate?

START THINKING

1. Read Matthew 27:26–37 slowly. What stands out to you about the physical and emotional suffering Jesus endured?
2. Why do you think Jesus refused the wine mixed with gall/myrrh (a painkiller) before the crucifixion? What does this tell us about His willingness to suffer?
3. According to 1 Peter 2:21, what does Jesus' suffering teach us about how we endure our own?

START SHARING

1. How does understanding Jesus as your substitute change the way you see the cross?
2. In what ways has Jesus been your example during seasons of hardship or suffering?
3. How would your priorities change this week if Jesus truly was your greatest prize?
4. Of the three — Substitute, Example, and Prize — which one do you feel you need to press into most right now in your faith journey? What's one specific way you can respond this week in light of what Jesus endured for you?

Imagine if your entire life was shaped by the suffering Jesus endured for you — your identity, purpose, relationships, and even your response to hardship. What would be different?

START PRAYING

This week's prayer points:

- Gratitude for the Cross
- Strength to Endure Like Jesus
- Boldness to Live for Him

START DOING

Jesus endured the cross so that others — including our friends, families, neighbours, and co-workers — could find hope, healing, and eternal life. This Easter, don't keep that message to yourself. Write down the name of one person you will intentionally pray for and personally invite to Easter.

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SUMMARY OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, in Part 3 of our Cross to Crown series, we looked at the suffering Jesus endured leading up to His crucifixion in Matthew 27.

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They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. 'Hail, king of the Jews!' they said. 30 They spat on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. 31 After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

33 They came to a place called Golgotha (which means 'the place of the skull'). 34 There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. (Mark's gospel said it was myrrh – a substance used to dull the pain – but Jesus chose to refuse it and instead experience all of the excruciating pain.)

35 When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. 36 And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. 37 Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Matthew 27:26-37

There's a part of us that wants to skip the brutality of a passage like this and fast-forward to the good news: the resurrection of Jesus on the other side. But this Sunday, we drilled down into the suffering that Jesus faced – what He went through and why it matters to us today.

Jesus Endured Flogging by the Roman soldiers

Executed by Roman soldiers, flogging was one of the most brutal and inhumane punishments imaginable. Victims were tied to a post and whipped with a scourge – an instrument which typically had 3 leather straps and small balls of metal, iron, or bone on the ends. These tore into the skin, bruised the ribs, and made every breath agony. Victims would collapse under the pain, only to be yanked back up and beaten again. It wasn't just physical torture but public humiliation as insults and scornful words were hurled at the victim.

Jesus Endured the Crown of Thorns

After the flogging, the soldiers mocked Jesus. They gave Him a purple cloak and a fake staff and pushed a crown of thorns onto His head. They knelt before Him in fake worship, spat in His face, and took the staff to beat Him again.

Matthew 26 tells us that Jesus had been spat upon and repeatedly slapped and beaten with fists the night before. The blows from the staff would have triggered nerve pain similar to electric shocks. Every jolt, every movement, every shove would've reignited that pain.

Jesus Then Endured the Travel to His Place of Death

In the passage, we read that they led Him out to be crucified at Golgotha, "the place of the skull." The road from the Praetorium was about half a mile uphill, uneven and bumpy.

Extreme pains would have radiated across His face and scalp every time He tripped and fell from exhaustion, compounding further in his muscles and joints from having to get back up again and again.

His cloak would've been stuck to His wounds caused by the scourging with dried blood. It was most likely ripped off His body, reopening the wounds and sending jolts of pain throughout his entire body.

All of this, and Jesus still had to face the most horrific of all – the crucifixion.

Jesus Endured a Roman Crucifixion

At the place of his death, Jesus would have been forced to lie down as Roman soldiers nailed His hands and feet to the cross with 5-inch iron spikes. Crucifixion victims were stripped completely naked and raised on a hill for most of the city to see – humiliation was part of the punishment. The suffering while hanging on the cross would have been extreme – not just from the nails but from the slow suffocation that crucifixion causes.

One account describes it like this: "As He sags down with weight on the nails in His wrists, searing pain shoots through His arms and explodes in His brain. To breathe, He must push up on the nails in His feet, causing more agony. Cramps sweep through His muscles. He gasps for breath... but each breath takes everything He has left."

Eventually, Jesus died from blood loss, asphyxiation, and shock.

What does the extreme suffering of Jesus mean for us?

CONTINUED/....

1. SUBSTITUTE: Jesus took my place

... the wages of sin is death ... (Romans 6:23)

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
(Romans 3:23)

We're all guilty of sin against a holy God, and the proper consequence for that sin is spiritual death. If we don't understand the weight of sin, we won't understand the beauty of the cross.

Many people think of scales as weighing up our good against our bad – like comparing ourselves to Hitler or Mother Theresa. But it's not a scale; it's a line: one side are all who have sinned, and on the other, all who haven't. Ray Comfort puts it simply:

- Ever told a lie? That makes you a liar.
- Ever stolen? That makes you a thief.
- Ever lusted? Jesus said that's adultery in the heart.

The Bible teaches that God placed our sin on His perfect, sinless Son so that He would take our place at the cross.

But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins.

He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. Isaiah 53:5 (NLT)

Imagine a judge finding a person guilty of the most heinous crimes and sentencing them to death as a just consequence of their crimes and then sending his own son to death row to take the place of the guilty. And then adopting the guilty person into his family. That's what God has done for us.

- Jesus was cast off so that we might be brought in
- Jesus was punished as an enemy that we might be welcomed as a friend
- Jesus surrendered to hell's worst so that we might attain heaven's best
- Jesus was stripped that we might be clothed
- Jesus was wounded that we might be healed
- Jesus was tormented that we might be comforted
- Jesus was made a shame that we might be given glory
- Jesus endured darkness so that we might have eternal light
- Jesus closed his eyes so that we might receive sight
- Jesus died that we might live

2. EXAMPLE: Jesus teaches me how to endure suffering

Thomas à Kempis, in *The Imitation of Christ* (written in the 1400s), emphasises the Christian's approach to suffering — a very different emphasis from how so much of the Gospel is preached today with comfort, prosperity, and ease. No wonder we have a generation of Christ-followers who expect Jesus to remove all their troubles.

When Jesus takes our place as a SUBSTITUTE, He takes all of our punishment. But He does not promise freedom from suffering in this life. Instead, He sets us an example.

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

1 Peter 2:21

Jesus's example in suffering:

- He endured (Hebrews 12:2 – he endured the cross, scorning its shame)
- He trusted in God's will (Matt 26:39 – not as I will, but as You will)
- He forgave (Luke 23:34 – Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing)

3. PRIZE: He died for me so that I could live for Him

Jesus didn't suffer and die just to forgive us – He endured all of this so we could know Him. And knowing Him more deeply should be our ultimate goal and reward.

- My soul was designed to find its WORTH in Him
- My hopes were designed to find ultimate FULFILMENT in Him
- My heart was designed to find its ultimate JOY in Him

7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ... Philippians 3:8