

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 31

CONVERSATION STARTER

Are there any traditions you remember from your childhood or that you practice today during Holy Week or Easter Sunday that are particularly special or meaningful for you?

THE DEATH OF JESUS

Jesus is brutally beaten, mocked, and humiliated. He's adorned with a purple robe, the color of royalty, with a crown of thorns adorning his head. He's crucified outside the city gates like a rebel for all to see. It's one of the most excruciating and shameful deaths a person can undergo.

As he hangs on the cross, Jesus says, "I thirst." And a sponge filled with sour wine is brought to his lips to drink. Throughout the Gospel of John, we've read how God's people were called to produce *good* fruit. Instead, their rebellion and sin led to the growth of wild grapes ([Isaiah 5:2-4](#), [Hosea 9:10](#)), and they brought judgment upon themselves as a result ([Isa. 5:1-7](#); [Jer. 2:21](#); [Ezek. 15](#)).

Instead, Jesus takes the consequences of their rebellion upon himself. And it is with the taste of Israel's sin and rebellion on his lips that Jesus breathes his last. His body is placed in a borrowed tomb.

Can you imagine what his disciples must have thought? What the world must have thought? This man who seemed to have so much wisdom and promise is now dead and buried, and with him, all hope seems lost. To the foolish, it would seem as if death had won. Every hope and expectation the disciples had for Jesus and his new Kingdom was gone in an instant.

But little did they know Sunday was coming.

It's easy to look around the world today and within ourselves and think that death has won and Jesus is still dead. Illness. Grief. Loss. Pride. Unfulfilled desires. Violence. Broken relationships. Addiction. This world is still a dark place.

But holdfast. Easter is coming.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. Why is it so important for us to pause and remember the death of Jesus before we celebrate his resurrection on Easter Sunday morning?
3. Jesus was mocked and misunderstood leading up to his crucifixion. In what ways does our culture today still do these things in regard to Jesus? Are there times when you may have knowingly or unknowingly participated in the reviling of Jesus?
4. Read the story of Peter's denial in John 18:15-27. Are there times when you've been tempted to go with the crowd, even if it means denying Jesus or downplaying your relationship with him?
5. As a group, consider the ways you might, both as individuals and together as a community, prepare your hearts to experience Easter in a new way this year.

WEEKLY PRACTICE

This is the last we'll follow along with the Lenten Companion Guide as our weekly practice. Each week, we've encouraged you to either give something up or take on something new in hopes of simplifying our lives, standing in solidarity with those who are suffering, and becoming people who love God and love others well.

Week Six: Fasting From Sweets

As we enter Holy Week, abstain from sweets—candy, cake, chocolate, etc. In the inevitable moments where you crave the sugar rush, remember that Lent is not meant to be sweet. As you sacrifice your desire for sugar, consider how much Jesus sacrificed for us, particularly in the last days of his life.

At the end of the week, reflect on your experience: *How have the past few weeks prepared you to better experience the meaning and message of Easter?*