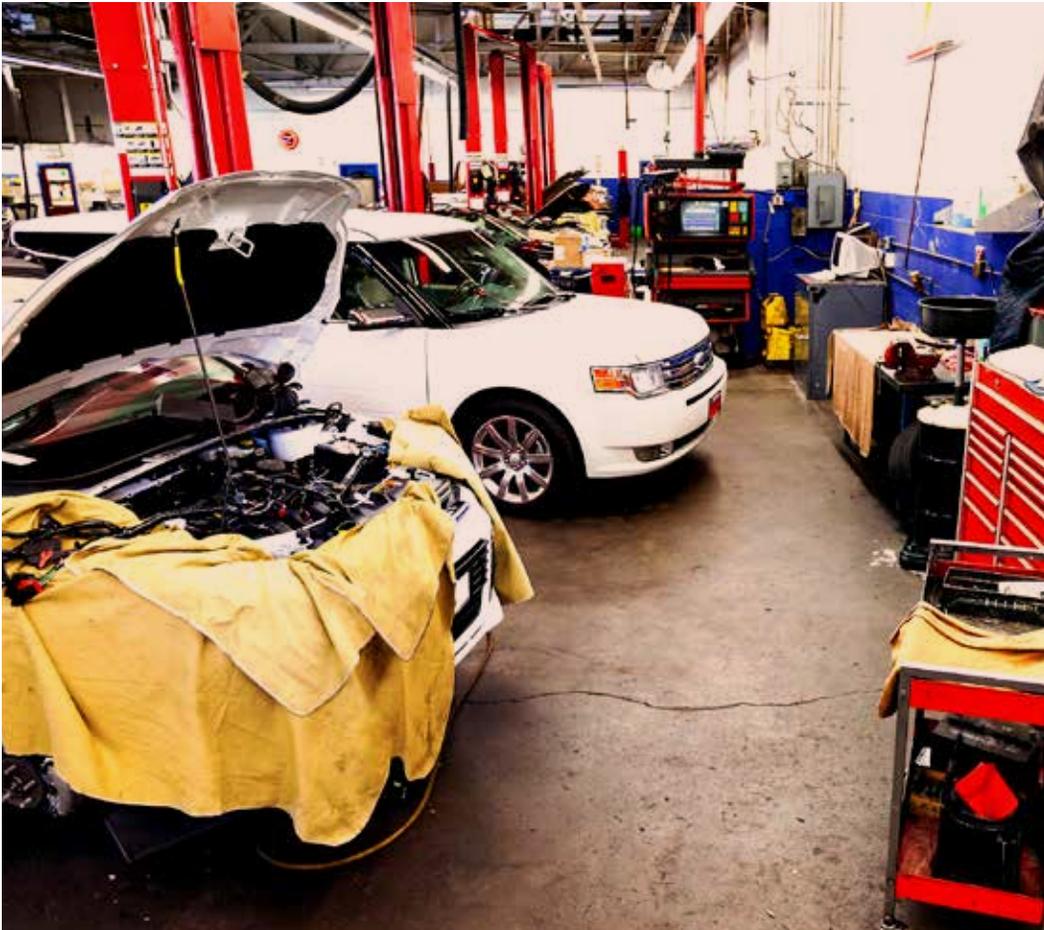


SESSION 4

The Death of Jesus



QUESTION 1:

When have you been frustrated by your inability to fix something?

THE POINT

Forgiveness is possible because Jesus died for our sins.

THE PASSAGES

John 19:8-11,16b-18,28-30

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

We have become a nation of do-it-yourselfers. In one sense that has always been the case, but with the ever-growing popularity of DIY (Do It Yourself) networks and shows, more and more people are being motivated and challenged to fix or upgrade something without calling a trained professional. *“I can do that!”*

If you get stuck, don’t worry. Whether you’re trying to install a Model #237H water faucet or repair the back door lock of a 2010 Ford® Escape, someone very likely has created an online video showing you what to do.

It feels good, too, when you can step back and see that you fixed something on your own. Even if it took you four times longer than the professional, you can say, *“I did it!”*

You can’t fix everything, though. Sometimes you have to call the licensed plumber or trained mechanic—and nobody would recommend that you attempt to perform your own heart surgery.

A broken relationship with God is something else you can’t fix by yourself. Plenty of religions and philosophies suggest you can, but their methods are ineffective. Only one Person can fix your sin problem.

John 19:8-11

8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;

9 And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

If you were to take a closeup view—a really closeup view—of a television screen, you would see nothing but a series of red, green, and blue dots. Those dots would fill your vision, none of it making very much sense at all. But as you step back a bit, the colors start making little patterns. Little pockets of color would start peppering in among the seemingly random scatter of colored light. The further you move away from the TV screen, the more those dots blend together until they become shapes you recognize: a person's face, a landscape, or text on the screen. One single pixel on a screen might look like it is blinking on and off, changing colors seemingly at random, but what is really happening is that pixel is being controlled by a main chip that has a much bigger picture in mind. It only seems random because you have to be farther away to see the full picture.

John 19:8 picks up about halfway through the account of Jesus' death. One of His disciples had already betrayed Him. The authorities had arrested Jesus, dragged Him out in front of an angry mob, and had Him flogged. The Jewish leaders were calling for Jesus to be crucified. Now He was in yet another private meeting with Pilate, the Roman official governing over Judea. On the surface, it might seem like everything was spiraling out of

control for Jesus, His mission, and His Messiahship, the result of terrible timing and randomness.

Pilate was in a bit of a pickle. As far as he could tell, the tension between Jesus and the Jewish leaders was just that: tension. Jesus had said things the Jewish leaders didn't like. Prior to having Jesus flogged, Pilate had told the Jewish leaders: "I find in him no fault at all" (John 18:38). In Pilate's eyes, Jesus was innocent.

But the angry mob outside was causing problems. If Pilate didn't give them what they wanted, he ran the risk of seeing his district descend into a riot—which would reflect badly on him as the governor. Pilate had the full authority to release Jesus or crucify Him; in fact, he was the only one able to order the death penalty. He reminded Jesus of that fact: "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?"

Jesus' response was significant: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." Think of what all Jesus *could* have said or done. He could've fought for His innocence. He could've started an argument. He could've changed everyone's minds with the snap of His fingers. Instead, He humbled Himself and turned Himself over to the whims of the angry mob outside. Keep in mind, though, that Jesus wasn't submitting to Pilate or the crowd; he was submitting to the will of His Father.

Jesus understood that even though things seemed to be spiraling into chaos, everything was actually functioning perfectly within the Father's plan. In Galatians 4:4-5, Paul wrote, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Like the TV when we step away from it, we see the fuller picture: this was all part of God's plan.

God is a perfect and just God, and the work for salvation was perfectly complete when Jesus died. Even when the circumstance seemed out of control, Jesus was able to complete His task, knowing full well He was held perfectly in the center of God's will.

QUESTION 2:

What evidence do you see in these verses that God was in control?

John 19:16b-18

16b And they took Jesus, and led him away.

17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

18 Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

As Jesus' trials concluded, they led Him away to be executed. He was not alone, though, for they crucified two criminals with Him. The three men were taken to "the place of a skull" outside the walls of Jerusalem. The place received its name probably because the shape of the place resembled a skull (which is *Golgotha* in Aramaic and *Calvariae* in Latin, the word from which we get Calvary).

The incredible event that took place on the skull was captured in three words—"they crucified him"—but those three words are powerful. The apostle John did not go into the graphic details of how extreme and horrific crucifixion was. The first readers of this account would have understood very well, however, since it was a common form of execution.

The typical cross resembled a *T*, with no top part against which the criminal could rest his head. At the place of execution, the soldiers laid the cross flat on the ground and fastened the criminal. Sometimes they might tie a criminal to the cross by ropes, but they also used nails. This was certainly the case with Jesus, since Thomas referred to the nail marks in Jesus' hands (John 20:25). Then the soldiers raised the cross so that the criminal was upright,

perhaps only two or three feet from the ground. In this position, the criminal experienced a number of agonies: severe inflammation, swelling of the wounds caused by the nails, torn tendons, throbbing headaches, burning thirst, the inability to breathe without rising up and causing increased pain, and incredible discomfort from the strained position. As terrible as the pain was, it often was not enough to kill a person, so the criminal was left to die from hunger and thirst, or asphyxiation. Some criminals were known to hang on a cross for a week, driven mad by their unbearable conditions.

As Jesus carried the cross by himself up to Golgotha, He was walking a path reserved for us. We are the ones deserving death. As he was nailed in place, His hands and feet were nailed when it should've been our hands and feet. And when He died, He died a death we deserved to pay, a price we could never afford.

QUESTION 3:

What emotions do you experience when you think about Jesus' crucifixion?

John 19:28-30

28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

If you run a red light in some cities, a traffic camera snaps a picture of your car and you get a letter a few weeks later with a citation inside. You broke a traffic law, and the only way to become right again with the city is by paying the fine for your mistake. Someone has to cover that cost or else you could lose your license or even

be arrested. It's the same with your sin. Sin carries a fine—death—and someone has to pay.

When God created Adam and Eve, they lived in perfect community with Him. But it didn't take long for them to break that community by placing their desires above God's command to them. When they did this, they brought sin into a world where it previously had no hold. Throughout the Old Testament, God wanted to help His people understand just how serious sin is—how damaging it is to our relationship with Him. For example, Leviticus 4 outlines all the things the people were required to do to be cleansed of sin; in every case, it involved sacrificing an unblemished animal to atone for their sin and guilt. Day in and day out, the temple would've been filled with the sights and sounds of dying animals and the stench of blood. All that went on at the temple carried constant reminders of what the people's sin cost.

But each of these sacrifices only covered sins in the past. No sacrifice could atone for the sins people would commit in the future—much less for all of the sins for *everyone* all at once. All that changed when Jesus died on the cross.

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

GALATIANS 4:4-5

Jesus was a Rabbi who taught Scripture, and He is the Messiah who also *fulfilled* Scripture. Because He was the Son of God, He completed God's plan for salvation once and for all.

When Jesus said, "I thirst," He was doing two things.

1. **He was expressing His physical thirst.** Jesus had gone without food and water since the Passover meal with His disciples. He had lost a lot of blood from the flogging and the crucifixion, and the body needs fluids to replace lost blood, so Jesus would have experienced extreme thirst.
2. **He was calling attention to the fulfillment of Scripture.** Both Psalms 22 and 69 are about a suffering servant—accused, insulted, humiliated, and in need of rescue.
 - “My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws” (Ps. 22:15).
 - “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (69:21).

John wanted his readers to know without a doubt that every part of Jesus’ death was according to God’s plan of redemption. God is sovereign. Through the Son of God, the plan of salvation was finally fulfilled, available to everyone who would put his or her faith in Him. “It is finished.”

QUESTION 4:

What do you find hopeful about Jesus’ declaration, “It is finished”?

Jesus was completing the picture He’d been painting with His whole life. He was proving He was the ultimate and final substitutionary sacrifice who would bring salvation. As God’s Son and the Messiah, Jesus didn’t bring salvation and deliverance from an earthly ruler; He brought salvation and deliverance from the oppressive force of sin and death that has plagued us since sin first entered the picture with Adam and Eve.

QUESTION 5:

Why is the crucifixion of Jesus an essential element of the gospel?

ENGAGE

In the first column, list several costly ways you've shown love to someone. In the second column, list several costly ways someone has shown love to you. In the third column, list ways Jesus' death cost God to lovingly forgive and save you.

My Ways**Others' Ways****God's Way**

Write a short prayer expressing your response to God's costly love:

LIVE IT OUT

Jesus' death was the final sacrifice that covered the sins of the world. In light of this historic moment, consider the following:

- ▶ **Give thanks.** Reflect on all Jesus has saved you from. Spend time in prayer, thanking Him for forgiving your sins.
- ▶ **Offer forgiveness.** Since you have been forgiven by the blood of Christ, identify someone in your life who has wronged you and reach out to them with a word of forgiveness.
- ▶ **Share the message.** The forgiveness and salvation Jesus provided through His death is available to all. Share this truth with a friend who does not know Christ.

