



Leader Corner

John 19:31-37

This study will focus on two areas: the detailed horrors of crucifixion, and the importance of Old Testament allusions to Jesus. As you prioritize discussion in those two areas, let your group struggle with the cold reality of why the victims' legs were broken in the first place, but then also let your group rejoice in the fulfilled Scriptures that clearly demonstrate Jesus as our Lord and Passover Lamb.

Main Idea: The circumstances of Jesus' death fulfilled Scripture.

Main Practice: These events should provide additional support that strengthens your faith that Jesus is the Christ.

Main Teaching: John 19:31-37

Refocus with Praise

Blown Away by Hillsong

Oh, Troubled Messiah
You prayed through the night
Unbearable sorrow
The world on Your mind

Betrayed by the kiss of a friend
You were taken
By Your own free will
Rejected and disowned
By those You came to heal
Stripped of Your clothes, You were mocked, You were beaten
Made a King of fools
A crown of sorrow driven deep into Your brow
Yet You made no sound

What You went through to love me
I'll never understand
What blows my mind away is
You love me as I am

They called for Barabbas
A King for a thief
Parading Your kindness
Like rags through the streets

Draped with the weight of the world on Your shoulders
As You climbed that hill
A burden far too great for flesh and bone to bear
You stretched out Your arms as You welcomed those Roman nails
Your body frail
The very hands that shaped the world hung up to bleed
Lifted on high, crucified Him who knew no sin
The Nazarene
The Son of Man, the Lamb of God, Emmanuel
Given to die

What You went through to love me
I'll never understand
What blows my mind away is
You love me as I am

Precious Redeemer
Lamb that was slain
Hope for the hopeless
Lifter of shame
Friend to the sinner
Grace to my soul
Death is defeated
Now my sin is gone
And I'm blown away
Yeah, I'm blown away

Crushed by the weight of the world that You came to save
You took my place
Your blood as rivers flowing freely to the ground
Yielding Your spirit, You let out a holy cry
As You gave Your life
"Oh, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"
Oh, my Jesus Christ

What You went through to love me
I'll never understand
What blows my mind away is
You'd do it all again

with Prayer

Have someone in your group pray the following Scripture, and then read John 19:31-37 aloud:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. - Galatians 3:13-14, ESV

Because this was the day of preparation for the Sabbath and the Passover, the Jewish authorities requested Pilate to order the legs of the three who had been crucified to be broken. This would hasten their deaths, so that the bodies could be removed before the beginning of the Sabbath at 6pm. Why break their legs? Because when someone is crucified, the shoulders have to support the weight. Eventually, the body starts to sink and droop, and it gets progressively harder to take a breath. In the instinctual struggle to stay alive, victims would use their legs to push themselves upward just long enough to draw a breath. Breaking their legs (with a heavy mallet) prevented this from happening and accelerated their death by asphyxiation.

Additionally, if it was obvious that Jesus was already dead (v.33), then it wouldn't ordinarily make sense for the soldiers to inflict another wound. Perhaps, after breaking the legs of the other two men, they simply wanted to be certain, and pierced him quickly to see if Jesus' body would jerk. Little did they realize how their actions were fulfilling Scripture.

1. Read Deuteronomy 21:22-23 and Joshua 8:29, and discuss how these verses are relevant to the request made of Pilate.
2. The normal Roman practice would have been to leave the bodies on the crosses, potentially for days, to serve as a warning to other would-be offenders. Given the events that would follow in the days ahead, how did this ancient Jewish law prove beneficial?
3. What do you think is the significance of "blood and water" flowing out from Jesus' side?
4. Why do you think these details are important to establish, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Jesus was, in fact, dead?
5. In verse 35, the author seems to go out of his way to emphasize the truth of these claims, for the expressed purpose of you believing it. But why is it important that you believe these particular details? What do they mean for you? Read 1 John 5:5-13 for additional context.
6. Many of the prophetic tones in this passage connect to Jesus' role as the 'Passover Lamb' and God's willingness to protect his servant. Read Exodus 12:43-47, Numbers 9:9-12, Psalm 34:18-22, and Zechariah 12:10, and discuss how John sees these Scriptures as looking ahead toward the crucifixion of Jesus.
7. Discuss any other key, biblically-based teaching points you recall from the weekend's sermon.

This Easter season, encourage each other to take a fresh look into the details of Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection as recorded in the gospels. Like the details in today's passage from John, the authors went to great lengths to include a variety of facts and testimony that they knew would strengthen and support your faith and confidence.

For Further Focus

For more on the excruciating details of what happens during a crucifixion, Lee Strobel's classic book "The Case for Christ" includes an extensive chapter on what Jesus' body experienced from a medical perspective. While difficult to read, this insight can amplify your appreciation for the gravity of what our Lord endured.