

Our new mission statement is: *Building Bridges to Connect Everyone to the Dynamic Life in Christ*. But what does being connected and living that life look like and feel like? This spring we will be going through the Book of Mark to discover what it means to live the **Dynamic Life in Christ**. These discussion guides will follow along with the sermon series by using passages from the book of Mark.

These guides will be organized using the acronym HEAR as a way to teach people to read the Bible. HEAR stands for **H**ighlight the passage, **E**xplain the passage, **A**pply the passage, and **R**espond to the passage.

Each week, there will be a page to print off for each member of your group. The printed sheet will have the Bible passage you'll discuss and some questions in the margins to guide them in examining those verses.

Additionally, there will be a leader's guide that will give you helpful notes on the passage (i.e. background information and definitions) as well as discussion questions to lead your group. These don't need to be printed for each member of your group.

These guides are designed to be discussed BEFORE the sermon, so the group can discuss the passage before the pastor shares his insights. However, they can just as easily be used after the weekend message.

Our hope is these tools will (a) help your group members learn to study/read their Bibles outside of the group and (b) give you a helpful outline for facilitating the group discussion. If you have comments or questions about the discussion guides, we'd love to hear your constructive feedback. Send your feedback to us at groups@foresthill.org.

How to Use This Discussion Guide

- Print off the "Life Group Member Guide" for each member of your group – or email it to them in advance.
- Use the summary statement for each week to quickly understand the text's theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Use the prayer prompt at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That's okay! You don't have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Prepare for your group time by reading the passages and the notes in a study Bible.** A good study Bible can give you some insights into the passages and how they connect to the whole book or the whole story of the Bible.
3. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God's Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
4. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what the teaching pastor said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, "That's a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we're studying?"
5. **Encourage participation, but don't let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don't allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people are just unaware of themselves and how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
6. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, "What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?"

We pray that you will hear God speak through Scripture and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His Word.

Date of Sermon: June 27- 28, 2020

Topic of Sermon: The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus

Main Passage: Mark 15:33-39

BEFORE your group meeting:

- Look up the main passage in a study Bible and read the study notes
- Print off or send the “Group Member Guide” (page 4) for your group members
- Review the “Group Member Guide” for yourself
- Have enough pens for each group member.

Topic of Life Group Meeting: The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus: He is not in the temple

Icebreakers (optional)

- Do you have any mental hurdles with Jesus, God’s son, all powerful and omniscient, dying on the cross?

Leader’s Note: Introduce the next part of the group meeting. You can read this introduction or put it in your own words:

“Today, we’re going to spend a few minutes studying the focal passage on our own before we discuss it as a group. I’ve printed out a copy of the Bible passage for you. There are some questions in the margins to help you. Spend most of your time on the Highlight and Explain questions. Feel free to mark up, underline or highlight the passage. I’m going to give us about 5 minutes to do this. Let me begin by praying that God will open our minds and hearts to His Word.”

When you come back together, use the questions below to guide the discussion.

HIGHLIGHT the Passage

- What key ideas, words or phrases stood out to you from the passage today? What is the significance of those?
- Did this passage raise any questions for you?
- How would you summarize this passage in your own words? Would anyone else add or emphasize something to that summary?

EXPLAIN the Passage

- Why do you think Mark (and other Gospel writers) slow down to record such details in Jesus’ death?
- Read Psalm 22, what is being communicated in that Psalm?
- What is Jesus saying by quoting it on the cross?
- Where do you see the dynamic life of Jesus on display in these encounters?
- What did the temple curtain contain? What might be the significance of its being torn in two? (Hint: Passover bread is broken in two, Jesus body is “broken” on the cross)

APPLY the Passage

- What truth from this passage do you need to cling to? What makes that truth significant to you?
- By God’s power, what is God calling you to change in how you think, speak, or act?
- How do Jesus’ words in v. 34 challenge you? How does Psalm 22 impact your faith journey?
- What does the reality of Jesus’ Spirit being released from Holy places into the world mean for your life now?

RESPOND to the Passage

- Take the opportunity to go to God in prayer as a group. Reflect on the words of Jesus’ crucifixion in Mark and in Psalm 22. Pray for awareness of Jesus’ sacrifice. Pray for acceptance of His taking our place. Ask God for a deepened walk of faith in light of his great love for you.

COMMENTARY NOTES ON THE MAIN PASSAGE

15:33 Mark includes this detail of total darkness for three hours. It harkens back to the Exodus as God brought total darkness over Egypt for three days (Exodus 10:21-22), when God delivered his people from the house of slavery.

15:34 Jesus cries out in a large voice "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" which is a quotation from Psalm 22. Further reading of the psalm speaks to Jesus' feelings of separation from God and the scorn of the cross. Yet it also points to Jesus' resolute faith in God the Father to deliver him. The psalm speaks to the future promises of Jesus' sacrifice on all believers because of his great work on the cross.

15:35 Jewish tradition held that Elijah was present at the Passover meal and would come to rescue the righteous at their appointed time. This coupled with Malachi 4:5-6 leads a bystander to believe Jesus was calling upon Elijah for salvation, while he was actually calling to his father.

15:36 Jesus thirsts... likely because he was beaten near death before he was hung on the cross. Historians say crucifixion victims typically lived 2-3 days on the cross. Jesus lived 6 hours. Yet this also points to an OT prophecy in Psalm 69:21 and much of the emotions that are poured out in that psalm.

15:37-38 "Torn" is from the Greek root word 'schizo.' The only other time it is used in the book of Mark is right after Jesus' baptism when the heavens tear open and the Spirit descends on Him like a dove (Mark 1:10). "And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased'" (Mark 1:11) This detail reveals that the Spirit of God was unleashed from the holy of holies in the temple, from the sacred place few could enter, to be poured out on the whole creation. See Pentecost in Acts.

15:39 Significant that a Roman centurion is the first to proclaim Jesus' divinity at the resurrection. Perhaps it was his front row vantage point, but Mark details this exchange for poetic punch as his Gospel has been leading to moving toward Jesus' coronation as messianic King.

Life Group Member Guide

Focal Passage: Mark 15:33-39 (CSB)

Passage in Context: Mark 15:33-39(CSB)



Bible-Reading Tip: Begin by asking God to open your eyes and hearts to His Word. In 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, Paul writes that the Spirit – who lives inside everyone who believes in Jesus – knows the depths of God and reveals Him to those who follow Jesus. So, always begin your time of reading the Bible with a prayer for Him to open your eyes and ears to what He will reveal. This doesn't mean that you will always have an emotional encounter or a special revelation, but you are acknowledging that He is that One through whom all wisdom is revealed.

³³ When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.
³⁴ And at three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?*” which is translated, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”
³⁵ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “See, he’s calling for Elijah.”
³⁶ Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, fixed it on a stick, offered him a drink, and said, “Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down.”
³⁷ Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ Then the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ When the centurion, who was standing opposite him, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

HEAR Bible Reading Method

HIGHLIGHT the passage

- Underline any repeated words or key ideas you see.
- Note any questions you have about what you read.
- In 2-3 sentences, summarize what was said or what happened.

EXPLAIN the passage

- What was revealed about God? His character, desires, and/or actions?
- What was revealed about people? What we are/do or what we should be/do?

APPLY the passage

- From this reading, what truth do you need to embrace?
- By God’s power, how will you THINK, SPEAK, or ACT differently based on what you read?

RESPOND to the passage

- Talk to God about what you’ve seen and learned in this passage.
- Ask Him to help you apply the truth to your life.