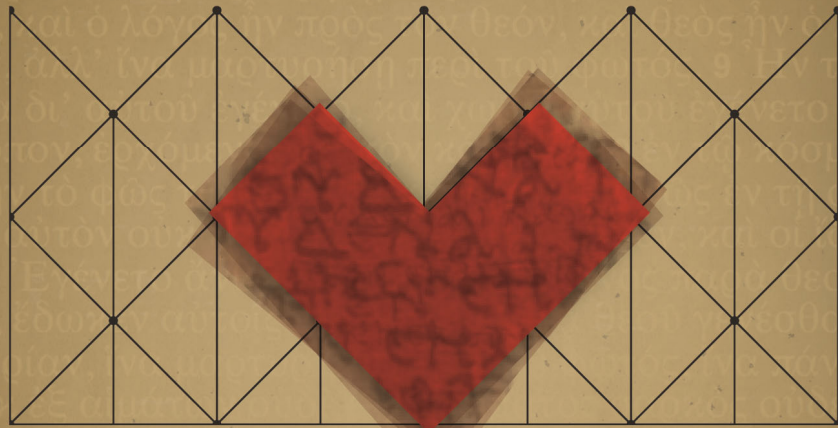


# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



# BELIEVE

Studies in the book of John  
**PART TEN— John 16:4-19:16**  
Group Applications  
Personal Study



**FOUR OAKS CHURCH**

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# John 16:4b-15

*For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

— Romans 8:14-17

## It’s Better That Jesus Went Away

John 14-16 provides us with arguably the fullest theology of the Holy Spirit found in Scripture. Sometimes it’s easy to think the disciples had it so much better than we do. They ate with, talked to, and even got to touch the incarnate Son of God! Surely being able to see Jesus face-to-face makes living out the Gospel so much easier than we have it today! The disciples certainly thought so and became “filled with grief” (John 16:6) at the prospect of Jesus returning to the Father. But Jesus told them that it is actually better for them that He goes back to the Father!

Why? How could it possibly be better that Jesus leaves them? How could it be better for us that Jesus is not physically with us? Jesus gives them (and us) the answer in the following verses. By leaving us, Jesus is able to send the Holy Spirit to us. Okay, yeah, sure, Holy Spirit. But how is that better than having Jesus? Well, think of it like this: Jesus, as a human, could only be where His body was. There are times in the Gospels when the disciples suffered and failed because Jesus was not physically with them (e.g., Matthew 14:22-33). However, the Holy Spirit is literally the presence and power of God living in us and uniting us to Christ. He teaches us about Christ (John 16:13), He convicts us and the world of sin (John 16:8), and He enables us to put to

death the flesh and live as Christ did (Romans 8:13). Jesus also promises the Holy Spirit will enable his followers to do “even greater works” than those that He did (John 14:12-14).

The Holy Spirit is not the impersonal life force from Star Wars. Neither is it some power that God gifts to believers. The Holy Spirit is God with us. He makes possible the promise of Jesus that “my Father and I will make our home” with believers (John 14:23). The Holy Spirit prays for us (Romans 8:26-27). The Holy Spirit comforts us (Acts 9:31). The Holy Spirit assures us of our adoption into the family of God (Romans 8:16) and will one day resurrect our bodies to enjoy the new creation in the presence of our King (Romans 8:11). May this induce gratefulness and awe in our hearts at the wisdom and generosity of Christ for not leaving us “as orphans” (John 14:18), but in coming to us through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

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## Grow

1. What are some ways that we misunderstand the Holy Spirit?

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2. How can we correct these misunderstandings?

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## Go

1. According to the text, what is the role of the Holy Spirit in missions and evangelism?

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2. Does the text provide any comfort for us in our evangelism efforts?

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## Group Discussion Questions

1. Describe your growing up years and the way you understood the work of the Holy Spirit. How do you think your past impacts your present relationship with the Holy Spirit?

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2. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the helper. Share a time you experienced the Holy Spirit's help.

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3. Jesus lists several ways the Holy Spirit helps us. What are they? Which one is most meaningful to you right now and why?

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4. One of the purposes of the Spirit is to glorify the Son (verse 14). How does this work? Why is this important?

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5. In what way do you desire the Holy Spirit to work in your life today? Ask the group to pray for you.

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## Additional Reading

From *On the Holy Spirit* by Basil the Great<sup>1</sup>

The titles given to the Holy Spirit must surely stir the soul of anyone who hears them, and make him realize that they speak of nothing less than the supreme Being. Is he not called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, the steadfast Spirit, the guiding Spirit? But his principal and most personal title is the Holy Spirit....

Like the sunshine, which permeates all the atmosphere, spreading over land and sea, and yet is enjoyed by each person as though it were for him alone, so the Spirit pours forth his grace in full measure, sufficient for all, and yet is present as though exclusively to everyone who can receive him....

The Spirit raises our hearts to heaven, guides the steps of the weak, and brings to perfection those who are making progress. He enlightens those who have been cleansed from every stain of sin and makes them spiritual by communion with himself.

As clear, transparent substances become very bright when sunlight falls on them and shine with a new radiance, so also souls in whom the Spirit dwells, and who are enlightened by the Spirit, become spiritual themselves and a source of grace for others.

From the Spirit comes foreknowledge of the future, understanding of the mysteries of faith, insight into the hidden meaning of Scripture, and other special gifts. Through the Spirit we become citizens of heaven, we are admitted to the company of the angels, we enter into eternal happiness and abide in God. Through the Spirit we acquire a likeness to God; indeed, we attain what is beyond our most sublime aspirations— we become [divine]....

Through the Holy Spirit comes our restoration to paradise, our ascension into the kingdom of heaven, our return to the adoption of sons, our liberty to call God our

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<sup>1</sup>Basil the Great. "De Spiritu Sancto." CATHOLIC LIBRARY: Sublimus Dei (1537), New Advent, [www.newadvent.org/fathers/3203.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3203.htm).



Father, our being made partakers of the grace of Christ, our being called children of light, our sharing in eternal glory, and, in a word, our being brought into a state of all “fulness of blessing,” both in this world and in the world to come, of all the good gifts that are in store for us, by promise hereof, through faith, beholding the reflection of their grace as though they were already present, we await the full enjoyment.”

# John 16:16-33

*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. — 1 John 3:1a*

## A Labor of Love

I love when the Bible talks about pregnancy and labor. Fourteen years ago, I gave birth to my first child. I had no idea what to expect. It brought me comfort to know that God created the entire process and that He understood what a mother goes through. And Jesus is spot on. In John 16:21, He says that she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. I can attest that the combined feeling of seeing your little baby for the first time, plus the feeling of labor being over, is a joy that is unmatched. But earlier in verse 21 Jesus also says that when a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow, because her hour has come. I say amen to this as well. By the time I was nearing my delivery with baby number five, I had a much better idea of what to expect. Labor and delivery are painful. Intense and painful. It is not something I look forward to. But I still wanted a big family. Because my heart rejoiced with each tiny bundle God graced me with. This little person, who God knew before the creation of the world, was meeting me face-to-face for the first time. My child was in my arms. The sorrow was squelched with glorious joy.

Since verses 21-23 naturally caught this mother's attention, I wondered, what is Jesus comparing labor and delivery to? And why?

Jesus is revealing stunning news to his disciples. He needs to bring them comfort. They are about to experience a sorrow and anguish they have not known before. Jesus is going to die. Jesus is leaving them. They will scatter and feel utter darkness. But...but, Jesus will return! They will see Him again. And their hearts will experience joy like never before. And that joy will never be able to be taken from them. It is an eternal joy. But, there is more! They are going to have an entirely new and different relationship with God .

“Now, when the Spirit comes, you will have direct access to the Father. This is really a stunning thing to the Jewish people, because God was distant and veiled. God was symbolically in the Holy of Holies, where only a high priest could go, and only once a year. He didn’t have access to God. But at the cross, the veil was ripped from the top to the bottom. The Holy of Holies was exposed, and God was saying, ‘Everybody has free access to Me.’ Everybody has free access.”<sup>1</sup>

*for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and  
have believed that I came from God.* — John 16:27

We can now speak directly to God. Jesus came to change our relationship with God forever. He is our Father and we are His children. He loves us with an unconditional, never-ending and affectionate love. He hears our prayers and it is His joy to answer them. This is our eternal joy. This is a joy that no one can ever take away from us. God is going to take care of us forever. We are sons. We are daughters. We are His.

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<sup>1</sup>MacArthur, John. “The Hope That Overcomes the World.” *Grace to You*, 29 Nov. 2015, [www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/43-92/the-hope-that-overcomes-the-world](http://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/43-92/the-hope-that-overcomes-the-world).

## Sermon Notes

[illegible]

## Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

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## Grow

1. Why must Christ go to the Father?

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2. What does it mean that the Father will do whatever we ask if we ask in the name of Christ?

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## Go

1. What are common sorrows people in your neighborhood experience?

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2. In what ways does the world seek comfort in their sorrow?

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## Group Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been confused about what the Lord was up to? If so, what were the circumstances? How did you respond?

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2. In this passage, the disciples expressed confusion. What were they confused about? How did Jesus respond? Why do you think Jesus used figures of speech?

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3. Jesus speaks of the disciples' sorrow turning into joy. What occasion was He referring to and how might that give the disciples joy? What other words did Jesus say to give the disciples comfort?

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4. In the past, how have you seen God turn your sorrow into joy? Spend some time as a group giving Him thanks.

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5. Is there a particular situation that causes you sorrow today? How might Jesus' words give you hope? Ask the group to pray for you.

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## Additional Reading

From *Irrevocable Joy* by John Piper<sup>1</sup>

### The Only Enduring Happiness

*You have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts  
will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.— John 16:22*

“No one will take your joy from you” because your joy comes from being with Jesus, and the resurrection of Jesus means that you will never die; you will never be cut off from him.

So two things have to be true if your joy is never to be taken from you. One is that the source of your joy lasts forever and the other is that you last forever. If either you or the source of your joy is mortal, your joy will be taken from you.

And oh, how many people have settled for just that! Eat, drink, and be merry they say, for tomorrow we die, and that’s that (Luke 12:19). Food doesn’t last forever, and I don’t last forever. So let’s make the most of it while we can. What a tragedy!

If you are tempted to think that way, please consider as seriously as you possibly can that if your joy comes from being with Jesus, “No one will take your joy from you”—not in this life, nor in the life to come.

Not life or death, or angels or principalities, or things present or things to come, or powers or height or depth, or anything else in all creation will be able to take our joy from us in Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 8:38–39).

Joy in being with Jesus is an unbroken line from now to eternity. It will not be cut off— not by his death or ours.

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<sup>1</sup>Piper, John Piper. “Irrevocable Joy.” *Desiring God*, 26 Mar. 1989, [www.desiringgod.org/messages/irrevocable-joy](http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/irrevocable-joy).

## John 17:1-5

*So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

— *Philippians 2:1-11*

### The Glory of Christ

Glory is the manifestation of the infinite majesty, power, and wisdom of God. In this intimate prayer, Jesus agrees with God's plan and prays for glory on the cross, in Heaven, and in the church. Up until this point Jesus has repeatedly said "my hour has not yet come," but here He says "the hour has come." Jesus seeks to glorify God by showing us what He is like on the cross. It is the supreme revelation of God and this



is why He prays that His glory might be seen in the cross.

Jesus also prays for His glorification in Heaven “with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.” Jesus gave up this glory to come to earth and take on human flesh. He had infinite glory, which cannot be increased, but now His glory is magnified because man can now begin to grasp and understand it. If Christ’s glory was left only to the heavens and to the cross, we would be disadvantaged because neither of these are perfectly accessible due to time and space, but there is more.

Jesus prays for glorification in the church, asking the Father that “they know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Knowing Christ involves knowing about Him, having an intimate relationship with Him, and becoming more like Christ as we grow in knowledge of Him. When we allow the life of Christ to flow through us, we are transformed to His likeness and are more able to glorify God. Believers are the world’s best hope for seeing the glory of God.

## Sermon Notes

[illegible]

## Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

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## Grow

1. The degree to which we allow knowledge of Christ to fill our being is the degree to which we can die to ourselves and allow new life to spring forth. How can you pray for this powerful force to work in your life?

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2. Jesus prayed with his eyes wide open and looking to heaven indicating perfect, unhindered communication with the Father. This is one of Jesus' most intimate prayers. Reread these five verses as a prayer and write your thoughts.

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## Go

1. To "know God" must include a commitment to Jesus Christ. What does it mean to be committed to Christ?
2. Jesus asks for the glorification of the Son, but the glory of the Son is not an end in itself. What is Jesus' chief purpose in asking for the Son to be glorified?

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## Group Discussion Questions

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word “glory” or “glorify”?

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2. Jesus’ prayer begins with the glory of God. Why is this significant? How might this inform your prayers?

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3. Jesus speaks of the Father glorifying Him. How did the Father glorify the Son?

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4. Jesus also speaks of glorifying His Father. What ways did He do that?

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5. How might you glorify God in your life today?

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## Additional Reading

From *The Burning Edge of Dawn* by Andrew Peterson<sup>1</sup>

The Power of a Great Affection

I will praise Him for the fields of green and gold

I will praise Him for the roar of many waters

I will praise Him that the secret things of old

Are now revealed to sons and daughters

I've been seized by the power of a great affection

I've been seized by the power of a great affection

So Father, I will give You thanks and praise

The Son has opened wide the gate of glory

He declared your mighty love and gave His grace

And I will tell his story

It is my story

I've been seized by the power of a great affection

Seized by the power of a great affection

Now this is the theme of my song

Now I will forgive as I'm forgiven

And even when the shadows are long

I will sing about the Son that's risen

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<sup>1</sup>Andrew Peterson. "The Power of a Great Affection." *The Burning Edge of Dawn*, 9 Oct. 2015.

That his kingdom has no end

His kingdom has no end

His kingdom has no end

His kingdom has no end

His kingdom has no end

## John 17:6-19

*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

— Romans 12:9-21

## Set Apart, Sent Near and Far

*"Death is defeated and Jesus reigns. Tell the world there is hope in His name."*

— Sojourn Music

The Killearn congregation sang these words before Pastor Paul preached on John 15. Paul opened up John 15 to teach this great truth: that obedience is what characterizes our friendship with God. After his sermon I kept asking myself, “Is my life being lived as an outworking of my friendship with God, or am I just going about the details of life?”

Our lives are often dictated by Google calendar, Alexa, work, and the business of life. Whether we labor at a job or in finding a job, in maintaining a relationship or in seeking one, or caring for an ailing family member versus caring for ourselves, so much of our time can be spent doing, seeking, and generally “behaving” that we can lose sight of our true purpose for doing, seeking, and generally “behaving.” Our obedience to God should be an outworking of abundant joy because of God’s abundant grace to us. Now this is easier said than done. When life is good we more readily find joy in God’s grace and can be obedient to His calling for us, but when life is sorrowful and we disbelieve God’s goodness to us, it can be more difficult to obey from a place of joy. In John 17:6-19, Jesus’ prayer to the Father gives us three types of encouragements to be reminded of as we seek to follow Him.

#### **The Father’s Election (John 17:2, 6, 9)**

You are chosen! From the beginning God chose you. You! God chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the great patriarchs. He chose Elijah the prophet and King David. He chose Naomi and Ruth. He chose Abigail. He chose Peter who would betray and Paul who murdered. He chose the Ethiopian eunuch, as well as Aquila and Priscilla. And you. John Piper writes, “The Father has chosen his sheep. They are his. And he gives them to the Son. That is why they come.” God’s unconditional election of us means that you didn’t earn, can’t earn, won’t earn righteousness with the Creator of the universe. You are saved because God had grace on you.

#### **The Son’s Sending (John 17:11, 14, 18)**

Jesus’ earthly ministry culminated shortly after this prayer, but in this passage we see that Jesus’ intention was to send us out. John writes just a few chapters later, “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’” (John 20:21) As believers in Jesus, we inherit the great commission to make disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28:19) Whether you are affluent or desolate, single or married, male or female, you are sent by the very Son of God to be



light and salt to the earth! You have purpose and have been situated in your stage of life to love others unconditionally, glorify God, and point others to Him.

**The Spirit's Equipping (John 17:17)**

You are not in this alone! Jesus promised that the Spirit would be given to help the disciples in their work, and the same is true today. When Paul writes in Romans 12 that love must be sincere, that we are to honor one another, to be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer, and to practice hospitality, among other things; these are impossible to maintain on a daily basis. Our schedules, commitments, and sense of self-sufficiency blinds us to the reality that we have God Himself in the Spirit to make our paths straight and to help us be effective ministers of the gospel to others.

So to the person who finds it difficult to obey, feels that their friendship with the Lord has dwindled, or is just plain tired from the dailies of life, remember that we carry the greatest message in the world. Death is defeated and Jesus reigns. Tell the world there is hope in His name. But recall that you are not in this obedience thing alone. Even as the Father has called you, the Son has sent you, and Spirit equips you, the church is here to encourage you, rally around you, and love you where you are.

## Sermon Notes

[illegible]

## Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

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## Grow

1. What does it mean to have a friendship with God?

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2. How does God's holiness relate to our friendship with Him?

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## Go

1. What is unique about Christian friendship?

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2. What is the role of friendship between believers and non-believers?

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<sup>1</sup>"Ligonier Ministries— The Teaching Fellowship of R.C. Sproul." *Ligonier Ministries*, [www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/anointed-burial/](http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/anointed-burial/).

## Discussion Questions

1. What comes to mind when you think of a priest? Do you have a story to share?

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2. Jesus is our high priest. What are some ways that He acts as our priest in this passage?

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3. What did Jesus emphasize in His prayer for His disciples? How might this inform our prayers?

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4. Jesus is interceding for you right now (Hebrews 7:25). How does that impact you? What do you want Him to pray for you?

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5. Jesus and the Father work together in all things, including keeping, saving, and sanctifying us. How might that encourage us? What is a way God wants you to work together with Him today?

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## Additional Reading

From *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers<sup>1</sup>

### **The Delights of His Friendship.**

Genesis 18 brings out the delight of true friendship with God, as compared with simply feeling His presence occasionally in prayer. This friendship means being so intimately in touch with God that you never even need to ask Him to show you His will. It is evidence of a level of intimacy which confirms that you are nearing the final stage of your discipline in the life of faith. When you have a right-standing relationship with God, you have a life of freedom, liberty, and delight; you are God's will. And all of your commonsense decisions are actually His will for you, unless you sense a feeling of restraint brought on by a check in your spirit. You are free to make decisions in the light of a perfect and delightful friendship with God, knowing that if your decisions are wrong He will lovingly produce that sense of restraint. Once he does, you must stop immediately.

### **The Difficulties of His Friendship.**

Why did Abraham stop praying when he did? He stopped because he still was lacking the level of intimacy in his relationship with God, which would enable him boldly to continue on with the Lord in prayer until his desire was granted. Whenever we stop short of our true desire in prayer and say, "Well, I don't know, maybe this is not God's will," then we still have another level to go. It shows that we are not as intimately acquainted with God as Jesus was, and as Jesus would have us to be— "... that they may be one just as We are one..." (John 17:22). Think of the last thing you prayed about— were you devoted to your desire or to God? Was your determination to get some gift of the Spirit for yourself or to get to God? "For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him" (Matthew 6:8). The reason for asking is so you may get to know God better. "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). We should keep praying to get a perfect understanding of God Himself.

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<sup>1</sup>Chambers, Oswald. "Friendship with God." *My Utmost for His Highest*, 20 Mar. 2000, [utmost.org/friendship-with-god/](http://utmost.org/friendship-with-god/).

## John 17:20-26

*It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." — Luke 23:44-47*

### Jesus Prays for the Lost

We see in this passage that Jesus finished His duties on earth by fulfilling His plan to show the lost that He was sent by the Father. His words indicated that they are united as one, and that He was the one sent to make the Lord known. Even in the end, He set the perfect example for us, to ensure that all would know the truth.

There are a few things to note in this passage. First, Jesus not only prays for the disciples, but also for those "who will believe in Me through their word" (17:20). His prayer is for us as well, even though we are separated by two thousand years of history. Second, Jesus gives to us a unity like His unity with the Father. Jesus is not the Father, but He is co-equal with the Father and united to Him in their will. Furthermore, when we have Christ we have the Father. Third, the Father has given us into the hands of Jesus to be with Him out of love. It was the Father's great pleasure to gift to His Son a people for Him to love. Finally, Jesus came to make known the name of God. God's name speaks of his character. It is a revelation of who He is. In Christ, God has given the supreme revelation of his character in the man Jesus Christ. We know the Father because we know Christ. And if we are loved by Christ we are also loved by the Father. The Trinity acts as one and therefore we can have full assurance that we are loved by the Father because we are one with Christ.

John 17 is filled with powerful Trinitarian theology. The early church fathers spent

much time in deep contemplation over the mystery of the Trinity, for it reveals that God from before time has both given and received love within Himself. Love is not something God merely does. It is who He is. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one and to possess one means we possess them all. Notice also how much Jesus expresses His desire to be with us and how much joy it gives the Father to give us to Him. God is not stingy with his love, but glorifies Himself in sharing it with us even though we are undeserving. It is the free love of God that turns our hearts toward Him in relationship.

# Sermon Notes

[illegible]

## Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

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## Grow

1. Why is it important that God prays for our unity?

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2. What does it mean for the Father and the Son to be one?

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## Go

1. What would you say to people who say that Jesus was just a great teacher?

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2. How can you get more involved with those who don't know Jesus?

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## Group Discussion Questions

1. When was a time you saw or experienced “oneness”?

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2. Jesus talks about Him being one with the Father. What does this unity look like?

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3. Jesus prays that we may be one the way He is one with the Father. Spend some time talking about how you’ve seen the church be one and give thanks to God for it.

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4. Jesus connects the church being one with reaching the lost. How have you seen this happen?

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5. Jesus also connects oneness with love. How do they relate?

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6. Spend some time talking about how the church has fallen short of oneness and what steps you can take personally to help the church grow in unity and love. Close in prayer and join with Jesus in asking for oneness in the body of Christ.

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## Additional Reading

From *Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust* by Immaculee Ilibagiza and Steve Irwin<sup>1</sup>

In a true story about the Rwandan Holocaust, Immaculee Ilibagiza describes a time when very lost men murdered over 100,000 innocent people because of their ancestry. Friends and neighbors turned against each other as evil and fear spilled from their hearts. The author was one of the few from her tribe who survived the torture, and she lives on, illustrating the cruel murder of her brother:

Damascene managed to get to his feet one more time, and then he smiled at the killers. His fearlessness confused them— they'd murdered many Tutsis and always enjoyed listening to their victims plead for their lives. Damascene's composure robbed them of that pleasure.

Instead of negotiating or begging for mercy, he challenged them to kill him. "Go ahead," he said. "What are you waiting for? Today is my day to go to God. I can feel Him all around us. He is watching, waiting to take me home. Go ahead— finish your work and send me to paradise. I pity you for killing people like it's some kind of child's game. Murder is no game: If you offend God, you will pay for your fun. The blood of the innocent people you cut down will follow you to your reckoning. But I am praying for you...I pray that you see the evil you're doing and ask for God's forgiveness before it's too late." (p.154).

In his last moments, Damascene shared the same love and concern for the world as we know Jesus did from the prayer reported in John 17:20-26. Damascene was unified with the Father and even made it known in the last wordshe uttered before being slaughtered by his former friends. He prayed that his enemies would know the name of the righteous Father, recognizing that they needed the same Savior that he trusted in.

Jesus was perfectly willing to face torture and then death on the cross, so we could

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<sup>1</sup>Ilibagiza, Immaculée, and Steve Erwin. *Left to Tell: Discovering God amidst the Rwandan Holocaust*. Hay House, 2006.

spend the eternal life with Him in glory. Because of Jesus' love, Damascene could show courage and faith under some of the most uncertain times imaginable. Jesus' prayers for His children were answered and the closer we draw to Him, the more compassion we can have for those who do not know Him.

## John 18:1-27

*When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: "Say to Joseph, 'Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. — Genesis 50: 15-21*

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which He was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. — Hebrews 10: 23-31*

### **Peter and Judas**

Faithlessness is the enduring quality of humanity. Every good deed, every heroic action, every noble undertaking, and every charitable work is marred by our inability to stay true. It marks the lives of ignoble characters such as Cain, Pharaoh, Saul, Absalom, and Ahab, and yet it also exhibited itself in the lives of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Aaron, David, and Solomon. One cannot recall a Biblical character that is unmarred by faithlessness. It is endemic to our very nature, this need to put ourselves first even if it means sacrificing our reputation, our trust, and our loves. It should be no surprise then that we find it on full display in the lives of noble Peter and vile Judas.

We too easily give Peter a pass— a brief wag of the head and roll of the eyes (“Boys will be boys!”)— and we too easily berate and disassociate from Judas (“Murderous traitor!”). Really though, what makes them so different? Peter was part of the inner circle with James and John, but Judas was in charge of the moneybag. Judas was trusted. Judas’ character was beyond question in the minds of the disciples. On the night he left their company to betray Jesus, the other disciples figured he was going out to give money to the poor. In their eyes, Judas was not a villain, but a good man and a trusted friend. He was no different from Peter, who, though known for his zeal, was corrected more than once by Jesus for his pride and short-sightedness, and who ultimately denied even knowing who Jesus was in His most critical hour. Both were faithless when tested. So what is the difference between the two?

The scary thing to consider is that Judas was not a monster (no more a monster than Peter). He did not possess any extra flaw that the other disciples were want to have. He performed miracles, he exorcised demons, he ate bread and fish that appeared out of thin air, and he walked with the Christ throughout His entire earthly ministry. That is the scary part: both men were more or less identical to the core, the key difference between them being the grace of God choosing Peter for repentance.

Take a look in the mirror. What separates you from Judas? Or Ahab? Or Cain? What quality do you attribute to yourself that they were ultimately lacking in? It is a call for repentance when we consider that any merit of our own gives us any sort of distinction from evil men. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Peter did not earn any sort of rights or favors from Christ, but rather received repentance and mercy from Him because of grace. That is the key distinction between him and Judas. That is the distinction between the saved and the unsaved. Though we are still faithless, He remains faithful, and His grace abounds in our weakness. He saw us in our weakness, and chose to love us, and to remain faithful to that love, even in the midst of our continued weakness and faithlessness

So tremble at that sight in the mirror, for temporally there is no difference between

yourself and Judas; then look away from the mirror and rejoice because Jesus showed His enduring faithfulness and love to you on the cross. He saw your weakness and loved you all the same. It is not on us to win favor with the Lord, for His grace and mercy have won these things for us. Praise be to God!

# Sermon Notes

[illegible]

## Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

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## Grow

1. What are some reasons it is difficult to believe God's grace?

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2. How would you define the term "hypocrisy"?

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## Go

1. What would you say to someone who objects that Christians are all hypocrites?

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## Group Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been betrayed? What were the circumstances? How did that make you feel?

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2. Jesus is betrayed by Judas, abandoned by His disciples, and denied by Peter. How do you think Jesus may have been feeling as this took place? How did Jesus respond in these circumstances?

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3. When Jesus said, "I am He" in the garden, John records that the soldiers fell to the ground. Why is this significant?

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4. When was a time you denied Jesus with your words, actions, or inaction? Describe how that situation impacted you both then and now. How does Jesus' willingness to endure the cross give you hope?

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5. Spend some time as a group thanking Jesus for enduring betrayal, beatings, and death for you.

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## Additional Reading

From *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J.R.R. Tolkien<sup>1</sup>

Suddenly he awoke from his thoughts: a strange feeling came to him that something was behind him, that unfriendly eyes were upon him. He sprang up and turned; but all that he saw to his surprise was Boromir, and his face was smiling and kind.

"I was afraid for you, Frodo," he said, coming forward. "If Aragorn is right and Orcs are near, then none of us should wander alone, and you least of all: so much depends on you. And my heart too is heavy. May I stay now and talk for a while, since I have found you? It would comfort me. Where there are so many, all speech becomes a debate without end. But two together may perhaps find wisdom."

"You are kind," answered Frodo. "But I do not think that any speech will help me. For I know what I should do, but I am afraid of doing it, Boromir: afraid."

Boromir stood silent. Rauros roared endlessly on. The wind murmured in the branches of the trees. Frodo shivered.

Suddenly Boromir came and sat beside him. "Are you sure that you do not suffer needlessly?" he said. "I wish to help you. You need counsel in your hard choice. Will you not take mine?"

"I think I know already what counsel you would give, Boromir," said Frodo. "And it would seem like wisdom but for the warning of my heart."

"Warning? Warning against what?" said Boromir sharply.

"Against delay. Against the way that seems easier. Against refusal of the burden that is laid on me. Against, well, if it must be said, against trust in the strength and truth of Men."

"Yet that strength has long protected you far away in your little country, though you knew it not."

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<sup>1</sup>Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. Vol. 2, pp.388-391, Harper Collins, 2007.

"I do not doubt the valour of your people. But the world is changing. The walls of Minas Tirith may be strong, but they are not strong enough. If they fail, what then?"

"We shall fall in battle valiantly. Yet there is still hope that they will not fail."

"No hope while the Ring lasts," said Frodo.

"Ah! The Ring!" said Boromir, his eyes lighting. "The Ring! Is it not a strange fate that we should suffer so much fear and doubt for so small a thing? So small a thing! And I have seen it only for an instant in the House of Elrond. Could I not have a sight of it again?"

Frodo looked up. His heart went suddenly cold. He caught the strange gleam in Boromir's eyes, yet his face was still kind and friendly. "It is best that it should lie hidden," he answered.

"As you wish. I care not," said Boromir. "Yet may I not even speak of it? For you seem ever to think only of its power in the hands of the Enemy: of its evil uses not of its good. The world is changing, you say. Minas Tirith will fall, if the Ring lasts. But why? Certainly, if the Ring were with the Enemy. But why, if it were with us?"

"Were you not at the Council?" answered Frodo. "Because we cannot use it, and what is done with it turns to evil."

Boromir got up and walked about impatiently. "So you go on," he cried. "Gandalf, Elrond - all these folk have taught you to say so. For themselves they may be right. These elves and half-elves and wizards, they would come to grief perhaps. Yet often I doubt if they are wise and not merely timid. But each to his own kind. True-hearted Men, they will not be corrupted. We of Minas Tirith have been staunch through long years of trial. We do not desire the power of wizard-lords, only strength to defend ourselves, strength in a just cause. And behold! in our need chance brings to light the Ring of Power. It is a gift, I say; a gift to the foes of Mordor. It is mad not to use it, to use the power of the Enemy against him. The fearless, the ruthless, these alone will achieve victory. What could not a warrior do in this hour, a great leader? What

could not Aragorn do? Or if he refuses, why not Boromir? The Ring would give me power of Command. How I would drive the hosts of Mordor, and all men would flock to my banner!”

Boromir strode up and down, speaking ever more loudly: Almost he seemed to have forgotten Frodo, while his talk dwelt on walls and weapons, and the mustering of men; and he drew plans for great alliances and glorious victories to be; and he cast down Mordor, and became himself a mighty king, benevolent and wise. Suddenly he stopped and waved his arms.

“And they tell us to throw it away!” he cried. “I do not say destroy it. That might be well, if reason could show any hope of doing so. It does not. The only plan that is proposed to us is that a halfling should walk blindly into Mordor and offer the Enemy every chance of recapturing it for himself. Folly!”

“Surely you see it, my friend?” he said, turning now suddenly to Frodo again. “You say that you are afraid. If it is so, the boldest should pardon you. But is it not really your good sense that revolts?”

“No, I am afraid,” said Frodo. “Simply afraid. But I am glad to have heard you speak so fully. My mind is clearer now.”

“Then you will come to Minas Tirith?” cried Boromir. His eyes were shining and his face eager.

“You misunderstand me,” said Frodo.

“But you will come, at least for a while?” Boromir persisted. “My city is not far now; and it is little further from there to Mordor than from here. We have been long in the wilderness, and you need news of what the Enemy is doing before you make a move. Come with me, Frodo,” he said. “You need rest before your venture, if go you must.” He laid his hand on the hobbit's shoulder in friendly fashion; but Frodo felt the hand trembling with suppressed excitement. He stepped quickly away, and eyed with alarm the tall Man, nearly twice his height and many times his match in strength.

“Why are you so unfriendly?” said Boromir. “I am a true man, neither thief nor tracker. I need your Ring: that you know now; but I give you my word that I do not desire to

keep it. Will you not at least let me make trial of my plan? Lend me the Ring!"

"No! no!" cried Frodo. "The Council laid it upon me to bear it."

"It is by our own folly that the Enemy will defeat us," cried Boromir. "How it angers me! Fool! Obstinate fool! Running wilfully to death and ruining our cause. If any mortals have claim to the Ring, it is the men of Númenor, and not Halflings. It is not yours save by unhappy chance. It might have been mine. It should be mine. Give it to me!"

Frodo did not answer, but moved away till the great flat stone stood between them. "Come, come, my friend!" said Boromir in a softer voice. "Why not get rid of it? Why not be free of your doubt and fear? You can lay the blame on me, if you will. You can say that I was too strong and took it by force. For I am too strong for you, halfling," he cried; and suddenly he sprang over the stone and leaped at Frodo. His fair and pleasant face was hideously changed; a raging fire was in his eyes.

Frodo dodged aside and again put the stone between them. There was only one thing he could do: trembling he pulled out the Ring upon its chain and quickly slipped it on his finger, even as Boromir sprang at him again. The Man gasped, stared for a moment amazed, and then ran wildly about, seeking here and there among the rocks and trees.

"Miserable trickster!" he shouted. "Let me get my hands on you! Now I see your mind. You will take the Ring to Sauron and sell us all. You have only waited your chance to leave us in the lurch. Curse you and all halflings to death and darkness!" Then, catching his foot on a stone, he fell sprawling and lay upon his face. For a while he was as still as if his own curse had struck him down; then suddenly he wept.

He rose and passed his hand over his eyes, dashing away the tears. "What have I said?" he cried. "What have I done? Frodo, Frodo!" he called. "Come back! A madness took me, but it has passed. Come back!"

There was no answer.

# John 18:28-40

*From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. — Revelation 19:15-16*

*If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. — John 15:18-19*

## The Humble King

It's ironic that John 18:28 states "they led Jesus" when in reality Jesus was in control the whole time. It is this weird mix where the crucifixion is both the doing of these people and the willing submission of Jesus.

The next part is just as ironic. It states that "They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover." The same people with the audacity to kill an innocent man also care deeply about their "cleanliness."

Both of these ironies are put to rest at the end of this section. When Pilate asks what accusation they have against Jesus, they deflect the question by saying "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." Then right after this in verse 32 we are told that this all happened "to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken...." This proves both Jesus' innocence and his complete control.

So if Jesus actually had complete control over the situation why would He allow all of this evil to happen? Christ allowed evil to take over Him to bear witness to the truth.

This is what Jesus claims in John 18:37. The King of all lowered himself so that we may know Him and listen to His voice. Like Barabbas we were set free because of His death.

# Sermon Notes

This image shows a single page from a notebook or ledger. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced, thin grey horizontal lines running across the width of the page. The background is plain white, and there are no margins, text, or other markings present.

## Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

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## Grow

1. How does knowing God is in control of even the most wicked of things affect your day to day life?

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2. What does Jesus mean when He says that “Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice” (18:37)?

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## Go

1. How would you explain the Kingdom of God to a non-Christian?

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2. What do you think people in your workplace think about the concept of “truth”?

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## Group Discussion Questions

1. Share a time you were falsely accused. What were the circumstances? How did that make you feel?

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2. Jesus was falsely accused and would later be sentenced to death, yet He did not defend Himself. In fact, He even prophesied this very thing would happen (verse 32). What does this reveal about Jesus' character and divinity?

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3. Jesus' focus was on building another kingdom, one not of this world. How do you think that perspective helped Jesus endure? How might that perspective help us endure?

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4. Pilate asks, "What is truth?" Why is that question important both then and now?

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5. Who is a person you want to know the truth? Spend some time as a group praying for them.

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## Additional Reading

From *We Are Barabbas* by Dave Furman<sup>1</sup>

I wonder if Barabbas ever got over that moment. You would think that the image of Jesus carrying his cross would have been etched on his mind and heart for the rest of his life. There are too many ironies for him to miss it. Barabbas's name means "son of the father." Bar means "son" and Abba means "father." In the book of Matthew we learn that his full name was Jesus Barabbas. Jesus, son of the father. Tim Keller points out that we have two Jesuses in our story. Both "son of the Father," and yet they could not be more different. One rules by taking the lives of others, and the other rules by giving his own life. One wants to overthrow the king, and the other is the rightful King of the people. One is guilty and will be set free, and the other is an innocent man who is about to be killed. The real Son of the Father, who is innocent, will go to his death. They freed the wrong son.

Jesus was going to be killed for the kind of crime that the man set free actually committed. The ironies continue. Jesus literally took Barabbas's punishment for him. Jesus even marched to his death as Barabbas would have. Jesus marched willingly and quietly. And yet it wasn't because he had lost. Jesus was not outsmarted by his opponents. This was not a mistake or an accident. It was not plan B in God's eternal plan of salvation. The crucifixion of the innocent Lamb of God was God's plan from eternity past.

In Luke 9 we read that Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem because he was on a mission. His whole life was moving toward Golgotha, toward that hill where he would die. His life was a march toward that cross. He lived to die. Jesus once said, "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (John 10:18).

The Jews chose the wrong man, but the Lord put forward the right one. That's the gospel. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). You and I are sinners. We sit in a spiritual prison, bound helpless, awaiting the day when we will receive the just punishment we deserve. We sit on the death row of all death rows waiting to be

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<sup>1</sup>Furman, Dave. "We Are Barabbas." Crossway Articles, 29 Mar. 2018, [www.crossway.org/articles/we-are-barabbas/](http://www.crossway.org/articles/we-are-barabbas/).

dragged out to death not knowing when God's righteous judgment will come down. But the good news is that when you repent of your sin and trust in Jesus to save you, Jesus goes off to the cross in your place. He gets what you deserve; you get what he deserves. It is the greatest exchange in all of history. Jesus gives up his life so you can have life.

# John 19:1-16

*The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.*

— Psalm 145:9

*The Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness  
continues through all generations.*

— Psalm 100: 5

## The Humble King

Pilate had Jesus flogged to satisfy the Jews, and never once did Jesus cry out for His life to be saved. Pilate even stated twice that he found no basis for a charge, but the chief priests were insistent that He be crucified since Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. You can almost see the panic on Pilate's face in verse 8. He's thinking, this man's life is in my hands— what do I do? When questioned, Jesus remained silent. I'm not sure about you, but if it were me I'd be making a case as to why my life should be spared. But not Jesus. Why? He was on mission. He knew His assignment and He had faith in his Father that this was the best plan.

Pilate was a powerful man and he knew it based on what he said in verse 10. Jesus knew (but Pilate didn't) that His authority came from God (Romans 13:14). Pilate tried for a third time to free Jesus and Jesus was again silent. Why? Because He knew his mission and was obedient even to death on a cross. Obedience to God trumps our comfort. This wasn't about Jesus being in control and saving face. It was about being under God's control so that God would be glorified. It was about God's mission. When we surrender to God's control and allow Him to lead and guide us— even if it means walking through the fire— it leads to all things good.

## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

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## Grow

1. Why were the crowds calling for Jesus to be crucified?

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2. Why did Pilate end up siding with the crowds?

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## Go

1. How would you explain the significance of the crucifixion with a non-Christian?

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## Discussion Questions

1. Think of an earthly king or queen from the past or present you admire. Who is it and why do you admire him or her?

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2. While Jesus is mockingly called “King of the Jews” by his accusers, what is true about this identity?

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3. Even though Jesus is king, He is flogged, beaten, mocked, and crowned with thorns. Talk about this paradox of the King who has all authority entrusting Himself to an earthly authority.

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4. Even though Pilate sought to release Jesus, he ultimately decided to crucify Him. Talk about how the fear of man influenced Pilate’s decision.

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5. How does the fear of man (seeking people’s approval) influence your decisions? What is a particular way you want to fear God more than man right now?

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## Additional Reading

From *The Crucifixion of Jesus* (Ligonier)

*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*

Understanding the work of Christ demands that we know the events of His life as they are recorded in the four Gospels. In God’s wise providence, however, He gave us not only the four Gospels but also the rest of Scripture, all of which is vital for knowing what it is that Jesus accomplished. When it comes to the climax of His work in the crucifixion, the Epistles and their clear interpretation of the cross event are particularly important.

By and large, the Gospels record what the people saw with their own eyes as Jesus hung on the cross. Certainly, there was much that the witnesses to our Lord’s death could learn about the crucifixion by seeing it happen. For example, hearing Christ’s agony at His forsakenness would have pointed the knowledgeable Jew to the truth that our Savior bore the curse of God’s wrath on the cross (Matt. 27:46; see Gal. 3:10-14). However, it is doubtful that any witness fully understood the significance of what was happening as they saw Jesus die on the cross. Such an understanding comes through reading the inspired interpretation of such things given to us by the Apostles in the Epistles.

Today’s passage explains how Jesus took on the curse for our sake. Paul’s teaching harks back to the book of Deuteronomy, where God tells the nation of Israel that they will be cursed for disobeying Him (Deut. 27:26). Ultimately, this curse must be understood as separation from God’s blessing and the eternal exposure to divine wrath. In this sense, it is the opposite of what was considered to be the highest

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“Ligonier Ministries— The Teaching Fellowship of R.C. Sproul.” *Ligonier Ministries*, [www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/crucifixion-jesus](http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/crucifixion-jesus).

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blessing a Jew could receive, namely the light of our Lord's countenance. The chief priestly blessing was for the believing Jew to enjoy the gaze of God's favor, to experience His good pleasure and peace (Num. 6:22-27). To be cursed, therefore, is to be denied these privileges. It is not to be denied the presence of God entirely, for the Lord is the one who pours out the curse in hell, but it is to be denied the presence of God's blessing and grace.

Being perfectly holy, our Creator cannot tolerate sin. He cannot even look upon it, not in that He cannot see it but that He cannot see it and allow it to go unpunished (Hab. 1:13). For us to be reconciled to God, our sin had to be dealt with. The sins of men and women had to be atoned for, and this had to be done by a man, for only a human being can atone for the sins of other human beings. The Son of God— as a man— atoned for the sins of His people, bearing the punishment— the curse— we deserved in His person.









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