

# SIX HOURS

## Group Reading Plan

### Week 1: Luke 23:34

**Get the big picture of Sermon Series:** Over the next 7 weeks, we will be focusing on Jesus' Crucifixion and his last words spoken from the cross. This sermon series will coincide with the historical church's season of Lent. Depending on your background, you may have heard of the forty-day season of Lent or even practiced things like fasting during this season. The overall purpose of the sermon series and the Lenten season is to focus on Jesus' sacrifice and prepare our hearts for the celebration of His resurrection. If you want to learn more about Lent, check out these blogs by "[Crosswalk](#)" and "[Cru](#)". We have also prepared a Forty Day Forest Hill Bible Reading Journal with Devotional Questions that follows along with the "Six Hours" sermon series. You can find it [digitally here](#) or pick up a printed copy at any of our five campuses.

Talk through these questions with your Life Group, your family and friends or others who are walking through this season leading up to Easter with you:

- For the next seven weeks, we will be considering Jesus' crucifixion and the last words Jesus spoke on the cross as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Sometimes we are so familiar with these accounts that we skim over them rather than consider each word and phrase carefully. Begin by reading Luke 23:32-49 slowly and picture the scene in your mind. Who is there witnessing Jesus' death? What would each of them be thinking and feeling?
- In Luke 23, who are Jesus' first words from the cross addressed to? Why do you think Jesus' first words are to Him? When you are in pain or danger who do you usually talk to first?

- Read Luke 23:34 and consider again the various people who are witnessing Jesus' death. Who do you think Jesus was talking about when he said "they do not know what they are doing"? What do you believe it means that they "didn't know what they were doing" when they crucified Jesus? Do you think Jesus asked the Father to forgive them because they were innocent or not responsible for his death?
- Look at Isaiah 53. This prophecy about the Messiah was written hundreds of years before Jesus' crucifixion and foretold his life and death. Look at all the times it says "us" or "we" in this prophecy. In what ways are these statements true about you? Read Isaiah 53:11-12 again. How does it directly connect to Luke 23:34? What does it mean to intercede for someone? Does this change or widen who you think Jesus was asking the Father to forgive?
- In 1 Peter 2:19-25, Peter connects Isaiah 53 directly to Jesus. How does he also connect Jesus' crucifixion to the way we are to live as Christians? What is an area in your life where you are suffering, perhaps unjustly, and can respond like Jesus? Like Jesus asked the Father to forgive, are there people who harmed you that you need to intercede for like Jesus did on the cross?
- Close by reading Matthew 6:7-15. How does Jesus' forgiveness of us relate to how we treat or forgive others? Why do you think Jesus included forgiveness as part of his teaching on prayer? Describe a time your acceptance of God's forgiveness for you or your forgiveness or unforgiveness for someone else affected your prayer life. Conclude by praying the prayer Jesus modeled (Matthew 6:9-13).



## Week 2: Luke 23:43

Talk through these questions with your Life Group, your family and friends or others who are walking through this season leading up to Easter with you:

- Begin by slowly reading Luke 23:32-43 again this week. Did you notice anything new that you missed last week?

- Look at Psalm 22:6-18. Where do you see Luke 23:32-43 echoed in this prophetic psalm? Why is it important to know that Jesus' crucifixion, including many particular details, was foretold in the Old Testament?
- The conversation between the robbers and Jesus while they were being crucified is unique to Luke's gospel account. Compare the two men's reactions to Jesus in Luke 23:39-43. What do each of them ask Jesus to do? How does Jesus respond to each of them and why? Why do you think Luke included these words between Jesus and the thieves in his account? What is he trying to show us about who Jesus is?
- Read Ephesians 2:1-10. What phrase do you see Paul repeating? How would you put this phrase in your own words? Paul is contrasting two kinds of people—those who are dead and those who are alive. Similarly, with the two thieves, Luke is contrasting two dying men's reaction to Jesus. What connections do you see between the two kinds of people Paul describes and the two thieves being crucified with Jesus?
- The Greek word used for “paradise” (parádeisos) in Luke 23:43 is also used in 2 Corinthians 12:3 and Revelation 2:7. By looking at all three of these words together, how would you describe what Jesus means by “paradise”? The same Greek word used in other places can also mean “garden”, and in Greek translations of the Old Testament it is used in Genesis 2 & 3. Look at Genesis 2:9 and compare it to Revelation 2:7. What do you notice? How does this help you better understand the place Jesus is talking about in Luke 23:43?
- Close by considering your own story of grace. How are you like the thief on the cross? When and where were you saved by grace like Paul described? If this isn't your story yet, what questions do you still have? Spend some time praying either asking God these questions or thanking Him for your salvation.

If you want to dive deeper, here are some other resources:

- The Cross, a video featuring Billy Graham and Lecrae that explores the power and meaning of Jesus' crucifixion and its power for our salvation: <https://youtu.be/lMZLPa-wCIA?si=XsB5GPWK5isA8hRy>
- Tim Mackie, founder of the Bible Project, teaching on the meaning of the word parádeisos: <https://youtu.be/HQlH-WfmZms?si=vOX5LIipbbA-aBeC>.



## Week 3: John 19:26-27

Talk through these questions with your Life Group, your family and friends or others who are walking through this season leading up to Easter with you:

- Today we're going to look at John's account of the crucifixion. Read John 19:16-27. How is John's account different from the one in Luke we've been studying the last two weeks?
- Read Titus 3:1-7 and compare it to John 19:26-27. How does Jesus model the commands Paul gives to Titus and other believers? How can we demonstrate this selfless care and kindness in our own relationships?
- Look at Romans 2:1-5. What does Paul say about the purpose of God's kindness in this passage? What does he warn the Christians not to do and how does that relate to God's kindness? Describe an example in your own life where kindness and patience led to a someone changing (which is another way to describe 'repentance'). Would judgement and condemnation have led to the same change?
- Read Luke 14:12-14 and think of Jesus' words to John and his mother, Mary (John 19:26-27). What did John do in response to Jesus' words? How is that similar to what Jesus said to do in Luke 14? Jesus is creating a new family relationship between Mary and John that goes beyond tradition. What opportunities do you have to show kindness and care to people who are not in your traditional family, such as people at church, in your neighborhood or around the city?
- Jesus' actions on the cross are the ultimate example of how God's kindness to the people who were witnessing his crucifixion and ultimately to all of us. His kindness was not based on reciprocation but was completely selfless and sacrificial. Pause and pray, asking God to show you a relationship or situation where sacrificial kindness could bring transformation and repentance. What is one practical way you can demonstrate this kindness in the next week?
- Close by reading 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and thanking God for his kind, patient love for you.



## Week 4: Matthew 27:46

Before you begin today's questions, meditate on this larger context:

- Jesus' cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" marks the only moment in eternity where the perfect fellowship between the Father and the Son was broken.

To grasp the magnitude of this moment, consider:

- In John 1:9-14, Jesus is described as the true light, the Word made flesh, dwelling among us in perfect unity with the Father.
- At His baptism (Matthew 3:13-17), the Father publicly declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
- Yet on the cross, this beloved Son experienced total abandonment. For the first time in his eternal existence, he was completely alone and forsaken.

Stop and think about what we can learn about God's character that He was willing to experience this separation within the Trinity to secure our salvation.

Talk through these questions with your Life Group, your family and friends or others who are walking through this season leading up to Easter with you:

- Today we're going to look at Matthew's account of the crucifixion. Read Matthew 27:33-49. How is Matthew's account different from the ones in Luke and John we've been studying the last few weeks? Which details does Matthew uniquely include?
- Read Psalm 22:1-5 and compare it to Isaiah 59:1-2. As we looked at in Week 2, this Psalm is prophetic in its foretelling of Jesus' death on the cross. However it is also an honest prayer and cry of pain from Jesus who was fully human. What is the response to the "why" question Jesus is asking in Psalm 22:1? In other words, was Jesus forsaken by God and why or why not? (Consider what Isaiah 59 says about what separates people from God.) Think of a time when you have cried out honestly like Jesus. How was Jesus' experience the same as yours and how was it different?
- We've been looking closely at the moment when the Father abandoned or rejected Jesus. Look at John 1:9-13. Who else rejected Jesus? How did Jesus' abandonment by the Father and others make a way for our acceptance? What happens if someone chooses to receive Jesus rather than reject him? What gifts and privileges do children get from good parents? Name some of the specific privileges and gifts have you received because God accepted you and is your Good Father.

- Read Romans 8:31-39. Has anything ever caused you to feel separated from God's love? What truth in Romans can help you overcome these feelings of abandonment or distance from God? Name one way knowing you will never be rejected by God can affect your daily life.
- Look up Romans 15:1-7 in several different translations (AMP, CSB, ESV, NIV, MSG). Use [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com) to help. What words do the various translations use for Paul's command about how we are to treat one another in Romans 15:7? Which one resonates with you the most and why? How can you live out Paul's command this week? Choose one person you know who feels rejected or abandoned and share with them how Christ's abandonment on the cross secured their complete acceptance. This might be through a conversation, a letter or email or even a simple act of kindness that demonstrates God's accepting love.
- Close with this simple prayer: *Father, thank you for the unfathomable gift of Your Son. Thank you, Jesus, for enduring abandonment so we could be accepted. Help us live as your beloved children, secure in your acceptance and excited to share this truth with others. May we never take for granted the cost of our adoption into Your family. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



## Week 5: John 19:28

Before you begin today's questions, explore more about the physical realities of crucifixion:

- For the past several weeks, we've been exploring the spiritual implications of Jesus' crucifixion. But it is important to remember that death on a cross was a brutal, physical reality and Jesus' suffering was real and horrible.

To better understand the physical realities of Jesus' death check out these other resources:

- The [Britannica website](#) describes the widespread use of crucifixion as a capital punishment and the painful way it caused death.
- This [short video](#) from [Untold Bible Stories](#) explores the medical facts behind Jesus' death on the cross.

Talk through these questions with your Life Group, your family and friends or others who are walking through this season leading up to Easter with you:

- Begin by making a list of the characteristics of Christ listed in Colossians 1:15-20 and Philippians 2:5-8. What do you notice about these two descriptions of Jesus? Why do you think it's important to grasp this full picture of Jesus in order to appreciate the crucifixion?
- Read John 19:28-29 and compare it to Psalm 69:17-21. As we've noted in weeks past, the Gospel writers often reference when something during Jesus' crucifixion was foretold in the Psalms or by one of the prophets. However, Jesus also used parts of the Psalms in his prayers because they were as familiar to him as many songs we sing in worship would be to us. The laments in Psalms 22 and 69 perfectly captured what Jesus was feeling and experiencing. Has a portion of scripture ever helped you express your pain or desires to God? Why do you think the Bible includes prayers of lament?
- Biblical scholars note that the sour wine mentioned in John 19:28-29 would have been what the soldiers had on hand to quench their own thirsts; it was not a sedative like the wine mixed with myrrh that Jesus refused (Mark 15:23). Giving Jesus this common, sour wine might have actually revived him and prolonged his suffering rather than helping him. Look again at John 19:28-29. What were some of the other details that John notes? Read Exodus 12:21-23 and the words that the Apostle John wrote earlier in his Gospel in John 1:29. How do some of the details that John shares in his account of the crucifixion actually give us a deeper understanding of who Jesus is?
- Read John 4:7-15 and John 7:37-39. What repeated image do you see in these passages of John? These stories of Jesus' life are only mentioned in John's Gospel, just like only John mentions Jesus saying "I thirst" on the cross. What could John be teaching us with these details? Think of your own life. Where are places in your life where you are dry or in need? How could Jesus fill you in those places?
- Close with by meditating on these words from Fifth Century Church Father, Augustine:

*"Man's maker was made man,  
that He, Ruler of the stars, might nurse at His mother's breast;  
that the Bread might hunger,  
the Fountain thirst,*



*the Light sleep,  
the Way be tired on its journey;  
that the Truth might be accused of false witness,  
the Teacher be beaten with whips,  
the Foundation be suspended on wood;  
that Strength might grow weak;  
that the Healer might be wounded;  
that Life might die.” - (Sermons 191.1)*



## Week 6: John 19:26-27

Talk through these questions with your Life Group, your family and friends or others who are walking through this season leading up to Easter with you:

- Begin by reading John’s full account of the Crucifixion in John 19:16-30. What did you notice this time that stood out to you differently than when you’ve read this passage in the past? What are the last words that Jesus’ speaks in John’s account? What emotions have you experienced when something is finished or completed? Do you think that is what Jesus was feeling? How do you think the people witnessing the crucifixion (John, the women, the religious leaders, the soldiers, the crowds) felt hearing Jesus say, “It is finished”?
- “It is finished” is the word “Tetelestai” in Greek, and its meaning is echoed in several different places in Roman culture and the Bible. One place it was used was to indicate that a debt was paid in full. Read Colossians 2:13-15. How does Paul describe our debt and the way it relates to Jesus’ death? Imagine the biggest debt you’ve ever owed—your student loans, your mortgage, your credit card debt. How would it feel if it was instantly paid off by someone else?



- "Tetelestai" was also used by servants and others to report that they had successfully completed a mission they were sent on. Read John 17:1-8. How did Jesus describe his mission in this passage? In what ways did his death on the cross complete the work that the Father had given him to do?
- Jesus' proclamation that "It is finished" can also be connected to the years of sacrifices the people of God had been making to atone for their sins. Look at Hebrews 10:1-4. What was the purpose of all of these sacrifices? Did they effectively remove sin? Read these short verses in the book of Hebrews about Christ: 7:27; 9:12; 9:25-26; 10:10. What words do you see repeated? How did Jesus' crucifixion finish the story God began in the Old Testament sacrifices?
- Close by reading Philippians 1:6-11 and thinking of your own story. When did Jesus 'begin a good work in you'? Recall the moment when Jesus' words "It is finished" were applied to your debt and your sin. Explain in your own words what work in your life Jesus' death on the cross completed.
  - Read Philippians 1:9-11 again. Where are you still in a work in progress? Which of these areas of growth do most want to see in your life?
    - Abounding in love
    - Knowing and discerning what is excellent and best (not just good enough)
    - Living in a way that is pure, sincere and genuine
    - Having a fruitful, abundant life that is in right relationship with God and other people
    - Bringing glory to God because your life helps others praise Him

If you'd like to explore more about Greek word "Tetelestai" here are few more resources:

- This [short blog](#) from Vox Church gives a brief overview of the word "Tetelestai" and its cultural meaning.
- This [longer article](#) by a Precepts Bible Study Group gives a longer explanation of the Greek meaning of the word and provides context from several Biblical commentators and scholars.
- For a longer explanation of the word "atonement" you can watch this [longer video](#) by Tim Mackie of the [Bible Project](#).



## Week 7: Luke 23:46

Talk through these questions with your Life Group, your family and friends or others who are walking through this season leading up to Easter with you:

- Read the complete account of the Crucifixion from the Gospel of Luke one more time (Luke 23:26-49). After focusing on these six hours on the cross for the past seven weeks, what phrase or part of the story resonates with you in a new way?
- Look more closely at Luke 23:44-45. What happened in the temple when Jesus died on the cross? Look at Exodus 26:31-35. Describe the significance of the curtain or the veil. Scholars estimate that the curtain in the temple during Jesus' time would have been at least 60 feet high. Matthew includes the detail that the curtain was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). Imagine what it would be like for this heavy curtain to instantly be torn in two. Why do you think it was torn when Jesus was crucified? Why is it important to know that the tearing started at the top?
- Read Leviticus 16:1-6, 16-19. This passage describes The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the one time a year that the High Priest went behind the curtain into the most Holy Place. What details about the ritual do you notice? Now compare it to Hebrews 10:19-23. Put into your own words why we can draw near to God in "full assurance of faith."
- Jesus' final words from the cross are ultimately about trust, even in the darkest suffering. While any suffering we may go through can't compare to the complete spiritual, emotional and physical suffering Jesus endured, we can learn from him how to be honest about the reality of our suffering and still hold onto our faith in the Father. Read Hebrews 12:1-3. According to this passage, what are some specific ways that we can endure? Who were some of the witnesses that surround you and encourage you to have faith or trust in the Father and endure? (Look back at Hebrews 11 for some ideas or name some faithful people from your own life.) Where in your life are you growing weary and fainthearted? How does Jesus' example help you endure?
- Read Luke 23:34 and Luke 23:46. Jesus first words from the cross were spoken to his Father and his last words from the cross were to his Father. In between he talked to a thief, cared for his mother, endured deep grief and physical suffering and declared victory; but he began with his Father and ended with his Father. Why do you think -->

these were his first and last words? Think about your own life. Who are your first words spoken to each day? Who are your last words addressed to? Imagine the last words of your own life on earth. What do you want them to be?

- Close by reflecting on these words from the Theologian Fleming Rutledge in her book, *The Seven Last Words of Jesus from the Cross*:
  - The Christian life is lived in between—in between *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* and *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit*.
  - So in this last saying from the Cross, Luke is teaching us how to die and how to live. Because we, by faith, are assimilated to Christ by his death, we are assimilated to him in his life beyond death. In his suffering we find our redemption. In his abandonment we find our acceptance. In his dereliction we find our salvation. And at last we are able to say even in the midst of doubt and perplexity, *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit*, even as the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said.

If you'd like to explore more about this passage in Luke here are few more resources:

- This [short article](#) explains more about the Leviticus passage on the Day of Atonement and helps us to understand even more deeply how it was fulfilled in Jesus' crucifixion.
- One of the unique aspects of the Christian faith is that we know God as our loving, accepting Father because of the Son's atoning work on the cross. This is a radical idea, that we can become immune to. [This essay](#) by The Gospel Coalition is helpful to grow in understanding the Biblical truth that God is your Heavenly Father.