



Leader's Notes – Session Four

These lessons are meant to serve several different audiences and therefore customized as needed and used with flexibility. The leader does not need to teach everything in the lesson but should choose what is most appropriate or needed for your audience and time. The answers also are included here as additional help in discussion. The unique experiences and insights of leader and participants will frame what you will actually cover.

Read the Leading the Lessons guide and the Narration sheet for additional help.

Experiencing Suffering and Death

Life isn't always what we dream it could be. Many have tried to create a utopia—a perfect world—but those dreams shatter. Life is often full of suffering. Broken relationships, sickness, abuse, poverty, and death affect people in every corner of the earth. Is that all there is? Will it ever change?

...but don't spend too much time here as it is just setting the mood.

- Discuss what you think is the hardest suffering to endure.

Answers will vary.

- What is it that has given hope to sustain those in the hardest situations? What happens when a person loses hope?

Some have found hope in anticipation of seeing loved ones again. Some knowing they are being looked or cared for. But when hope is lost, anger, loss of desire to do anything, depression, and even suicide results.

[Watch “My Son, My Savior” Chapter 4 – The Lamb is Sacrificed]

- *What struck home most as you watched?*
- *What questions emerge for you?*

John the Baptist's Longing

Read Luke 7:18-35

- Discuss Jesus' answer in vs. 21,22 to John's question, “Are you the one who was to come?” How did that give comfort to John? (*You can look up Isaiah 35 and 42:7 to understand more.*)

Jesus was doing what the Old Testament prophets had predicted.

- What was Jesus implying, “Blessed is the one who does not fall away on account of me” (v.23). (See also Matthew 5:11-12.)

There will be plenty of things trying to discourage us from following Jesus. Troubles will come. For some Jesus will become a stumbling block. The suffering, pain, or persecution is not worth comparing to the present and future joys of following him. God reveals his glory out of our suffering.

Many of the disciples died as martyrs for their faith. That martyrdom still continues to this day as people would rather give up their life here than their faith and hope of eternal life with God.

- Figure out what Jesus meant when he said, “I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” (v.28).

Jesus continued to emphasize that it isn't the great works a person does that make him great, but his simple faith in Christ—faith like a little child.

Understanding the Ultimate Suffering

Many people in life have suffered untold pain, yet there is a suffering that far exceeds anything experienced here that should be at the core of our understanding. Scripture reveals what we cannot see, that those who do not stand before God in full righteousness will forever experience “*eternal punishment; the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*” (See Matthew 13:36-43; 25:41-46.) The beauty in all this is that our God of justice is also a God of mercy who has a burning desire to restore us to an intimate relationship with him, now and forever. But salvation has a price.

The Lamb who was Slain

Read the prophecy of Isaiah 53.

- Identify the imagery that illustrates how Jesus would be the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” and the impact it has on us.
 - *He was despised (so we could be accepted).*
 - *He took up our infirmities (like the scapegoat removing our sins from us).*
 - *He was stricken by God—pierced for our transgressions, laid on him the iniquity of us all, the punishment that brought us peace (the sacrifice in our place on the cross).*
 - *He was led like a lamb to the slaughter (the torture he endured on the way to being the sacrifice).*
 - *As a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth (he went willingly).*
 - *It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer as a guilt offering.*
 - *He was numbered with the transgressors for he bore the sin of many.*
- For further insights into Christ as the Lamb, capture the picture these passages paint for us:
 - 1 Peter 1:17-20 – *we were redeemed not with silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world...*
 - Hebrews 7:23-27 – *Jesus is THE high priest all the others foreshadowed—but not just the priest, but the sacrifice “He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.”*
 - Hebrews 9:11-15, 27-28 – *Jesus entered the Holy Place as high priest, not over and over again with the blood of goats, lambs, but once for all by his own blood which cleanses our consciences from acts that lead to death ... he has died as a ransom to set us from so we may receive the promised eternal inheritance. He was sacrificed once which too takes away the sins of many people.*
 - Hebrews 10:1-22 – *Old Testament that was repeated were not the realities that forgive sins and make people perfect in God's eyes. People still felt guilty. They were an annual reminder of sins. But we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

- Illustrate in your own words, sketches, or role-play how this is explained in the following passages:

“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them... God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:19,21 – The Great Exchange).

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:13,14).

Leader note: Participants may have different ways of illustrating this. Encourage creativity.

Crucifixion Account
 Matthew 26-27
 Mark 14-15
 Luke 22-23
 John 18-19

New Life Emerges

- Discuss how the following passages depict Jesus’ resurrection effect on you today.

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25-26).

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, ... having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead ... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins ... For your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Colossians 2:9-15; 3:3,4).

Leader note: Those who believe in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection will never die (be transferred through death into life with God in heaven). Through baptism, we are connected to Jesus’ death and also raised in connection with his resurrection. It is a new life of faith—living in his forgiveness and hidden (enveloped and clothed) with Christ. When he returns, he will bring us into his glory.

Resurrection Account
 Matthew 28
 Mark 16
 Luke 24
 John 20

- Skim through the following passages in Revelation and build a description of what it says about the Lamb on his throne:

Revelation 5:1-14

Revelation 7:9-17

Revelation 13:8

Revelation 17:12-14

Revelation 19:6-10

Revelation 21:5-11

Revelation 21:23-27

In John’s vision, the revelation given him by Jesus himself, he saw...

...a Lamb looking as if had been slain, standing in the center of the throne of heaven. The elders fell down before the Lamb and sang, you are worthy to open the scrolls (tell the future outcomes) because you were slain and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.”

The Lamb was slain from the creation of the world. The Lamb will overcome the enemy because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.

People from every nation, tribe, people, and language were standing before the throne in front of the Lamb. They are the ones who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They are the ones whose names are written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain. The Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd.

This is the wedding supper of the Lamb with his Bride (the Church—his followers). The bride will be beautifully dressed by the bridegroom and shining with jewels. The glory of the Lamb will give the city of God light.

**(Holy City, Jerusalem is imagery in Revelation for His Church—those who throughout time believed in the Messiah)*

The Journey of Faith

After Jesus ascended to his throne in heaven, we see Mary, Jesus mother, taking her place alongside the others who looked to Jesus as Savior and waited in eager anticipation of what he would do next: “*They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers*” (Acts 1:14). That is the last time Mary is mentioned in Scripture. From mother to disciple; from one who protected him as a child to one who finds salvation in him as her Savior...such was her journey of faith, a faith many other disciples staked their lives on.

Now that same Holy Spirit who miraculously caused a union of the divine and the human inside of Mary in the person of Jesus, also miraculously causes Jesus to live in us by faith through the powerful gospel coming to us in the Word, in Baptism and Holy Communion. For us in this life it is a journey of understanding—a continual struggle to understand our relationship with God more clearly in a world that often denies him. It is the struggle to live more in line with his purpose and role for us in our period of time. All in all, like Mary, we are blessed to call Jesus our Savior!

Put it into Practice:

- Regularly read through the crucifixion and resurrection accounts. Consider how many staked their lives on this as you go about your day. Determine its impact on your choices.
- See your life as one that has been reconciled (reunited) with God. Wake up every morning with thankfulness that it is a historic fact in Christ and let it drive your daily relationship with God.

EASTER SONGS to consider that express similar messages to this lesson:

You may want to refer people to the messages in these songs

- Deep Were His Wounds – *He suffered shame and scorn and wretched, dire disgrace; Forsaken and forlorn, he hung there in our place. But all who would from sin be free look to his cross for victory*
- Jesus, they Blood and Righteousness – *Lord, I believe your precious blood, which at the very throne of God forever will for sinners plead, for me – e’en for my soul – was shed...fully through you absolved I am from sin and fear, from guilt and shame*
- I Know that My Redeemer Lives – *He lives triumphant from the grave; He lives eternally to save*
- Mary, Did you Know – *the child that you’ve delivered, will soon deliver you*

The Creeds of the Church

The three creeds of the church—the Apostles’, the Nicene, and the Athanasian—become good summaries of what is being communicated in these lessons.

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