



UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Through the Bible

September 22 - 28

Mark 15

Things to Know

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Gospel Connections and Conversations

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*Studying God's Word **In Community***

*Reminder: Seek to understand and apply God's word, **not** rehash the sermon.*

Sermon Recap

- The cross exposes the depth of human sin.
 - The cross displays the cost of divine love.
 - The cross opens the way to life with God.
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Discussion Questions

1. How does Simon of Cyrene being forced to carry the cross (v. 21) illustrate both the cost and the call of discipleship (cf. Luke 9:23)?
 2. What do the soldiers' actions of dividing Jesus' garments (v. 24) show us about how the world treats the things of God?
 3. Why is Jesus' cry of abandonment, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (v. 34), so central to understanding the gospel?
 4. What is the significance of the temple curtain tearing in two from top to bottom (v. 38), and how does this shape our access to God today?
 5. Why is the centurion's confession—"Truly this man was the Son of God!" (v. 39)—so powerful, and how does it model a right response to the cross?
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Read

Read Mark 15:21-39 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
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The Crucifixion

21 And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. **22** And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). **23** And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. **24** And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. **25** And it was the third hour when they crucified him. **26** And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." **27** And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. **29** And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, **30** save yourself, and come down from the cross!" **31** So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. **32** Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

The Death of Jesus

33 And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. **34** And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" **35** And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." **36** And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." **37** And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. **38** And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. **39** And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

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Mark 15:21-39

Living on Mission In Community

The cross of Jesus is not simply an ancient tragedy; it is the turning point of human history and the doorway into your relationship with God. In His suffering, He bore your sin so that you might never be forsaken. In His death, the curtain was torn, giving you direct access to the Father. In His final breath, He secured your eternal life. The only fitting response is to confess, like the centurion, “Truly this man was the Son of God,” and to live boldly in that truth. So the question is—will you live this week as if the curtain is truly torn and nothing stands between you and God?

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources - September 22-28

Small Group Curriculum: Mark 15:21-29

1. Session Overview

This passage draws us to the center of the gospel—the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. We see Simon of Cyrene compelled to carry the cross, Jesus mocked and crucified, and His final cry as the temple curtain tears in two. Here we witness both the depths of human sin and the heights of God’s saving love.

Theme: The cross reveals both the weight of sin and the wonder of salvation.

Aim: To reflect on the meaning of the cross, worship Christ for His sacrifice, and live in light of His victory.

2. Opening (Prayer & Icebreaker)

Prayer: Begin by thanking God for the cross and asking the Spirit to open hearts to the depth of Christ’s sacrifice.

Icebreaker:

- **Share about something you’ve carried for someone else (literal or figurative). How did it feel to bear their burden?**
- **Transition:** In today’s passage, Simon of Cyrene literally carries Jesus’ cross, but Christ carries the weight of our sin to bring salvation.

Accountability Moment (2–3s groups):

“Is there any way we can pray for our personal walks with God this week?”

3. Scripture Reading

Read **Mark 15:21–39** aloud together. Encourage different voices for narrative weight.

4. Teaching Points

a. The Cross is Personal (vv. 21–23)

- **Simon of Cyrene reminds us that Jesus’ death is not abstract—it touches ordinary lives.**
- **The cross is not just history; it demands personal response.**

b. The Cross Reveals Human Rebellion (vv. 24–32)

- **Soldiers gamble, leaders mock, passersby sneer. Humanity ridicules the Savior.**
- **Sin at its core rejects God’s authority and mocks His rule.**
- **Yet this was according to God’s plan (Isa. 53:3–5).**

c. The Cross is Substitutionary (vv. 33–36)

- **Jesus bears the forsakenness of sin—“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”**
- **He takes the wrath of God in our place so we may be reconciled.**

d. The Cross Brings Access and Assurance (vv. 37–39)

- **Curtain torn = open access to God through Jesus (Heb. 10:19–22).**
- **The centurion confesses, “Truly this man was the Son of God”—the first Gentile in Mark to make such a declaration.**
- **The cross leads to worship and new life.**

5. Discussion Questions

1. **How does Simon of Cyrene’s role (v. 21) challenge or encourage you about carrying your cross daily (Luke 9:23)?**
2. **Why do you think people mocked Jesus instead of showing pity (vv. 29–32)? What does this reveal about the human heart?**
3. **What does Jesus’ cry in verse 34 teach us about the cost of sin and the depth of His suffering for us?**
4. **How does the torn temple curtain (v. 38) shape your confidence in drawing near to God?**
5. **The centurion’s confession (v. 39) came after seeing Jesus die. How does the cross move you to confess Jesus as Lord?**

6. Application Points

- **Carry Your Cross:** Like Simon, we are called to bear Christ’s cross daily—not in saving power, but in self-denial and obedience.
- **See Sin Clearly:** Mockery at the cross is a mirror of our rebellion. Repent daily of where you resist Christ’s reign.
- **Rest in Substitution:** Jesus’ forsakenness means you never will be forsaken. Preach this truth to yourself in seasons of doubt.
- **Live with Access:** The curtain is torn—walk boldly with God in prayer, worship, and witness.

Application Question: How will you live this week in light of the truth that the way to God has been opened for you through Jesus’ death?

7. Closing Reflection & Prayer

Reflection: Sit silently for one minute. Picture the torn curtain and the cross of Christ. Give thanks that nothing stands between you and God.

Prayer: End with prayers of thanksgiving for the cross, prayers of confession for sin, and prayers of boldness to live in light of Jesus' victory.

8. Memory Verse

Mark 15:39 – *"And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'"*

9. Leader's Notes

- **Gospel Clarity:** Emphasize substitutionary atonement—Jesus in our place.
- **Encourage Vulnerability:** The passage is heavy. Allow space for group members to confess sin and burdens.
- **Christ-Centered Focus:** Keep pointing to Jesus as the Son of God who died and rose for us.
- **Practicality:** Encourage concrete steps: more intentional prayer, sharing the gospel, practicing confession, or taking time daily to thank Christ for the cross.