

Luke 23:26-56

Responses to Jesus' Death

Study Summary

Luke, as a true historian, records Jesus' crucifixion through the eyes of many witnesses. Through this study, we will look at different people's responses to Jesus' death and consider what our own response should be.

You may wish to read this summary out loud or paraphrase it for the group to start off your study time.

Steps to Prepare (For Leaders)

- Read through the materials and questions to understand the focus of the study. There are many things that could be discussed with this passage, but this specific set of materials focuses on responses to Jesus' death.
- Pray that God would enable your group to reflect on and respond well to the reality of Jesus' death.

Pray for your time together as a group.

Read Out Loud: Luke 23:26-56 (NIV)

²⁶ As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷ A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. ²⁸ Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'" ³⁰ Then

"they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!'"
and to the hills, "Cover us!"

³¹ For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

³⁵ The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One."

³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷ and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

³⁸ There was a written notice above him, which read: this is the king of the jews.

³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

⁴³ Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

⁴⁴ It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵ for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.

⁴⁷ The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.” ⁴⁸ When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. ⁴⁹ But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

⁵⁰ Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, ⁵¹ who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. ⁵² Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’ body. ⁵³ Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. ⁵⁴ It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

⁵⁵ The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. ⁵⁶ Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

Simon’s Response (Vs. 26)



Reread Luke 9:21-26. How do you understand this passage differently in light of the passage we are studying now?

Read Out Loud: Luke 9:21-26 (NIV)

²¹ Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. ²² And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

²³ Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. ²⁵ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? ²⁶ Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Possible Answers: Jesus knew that He was going to be rejected by His people and suffer and die at their hands. Yet knowing this, He still went forward to Jerusalem to die for their sins. This reality gives weight to His words about His disciples carrying their crosses and losing their life to save it as His followers because Jesus willingly led by example.

? What implications are there for Christ-followers that Simon carried Jesus' cross on the way to His crucifixion?

Possible Answers: Simon serves as an example of taking up our cross and following Christ. Jesus knows that His followers will face hardship and potential persecution for following Him, and He still called them to walk in that suffering for His name and for their ultimate good.

? We may not physically carry a cross for Jesus, but in what ways do we participate in His sufferings?

Leader's Note: If needed, you can reference 2 Corinthians 1:5, Philippians 3:10, and 1 Peter 4:13. Also, depending on how well your discussion of hardship/suffering went on Luke 21, you may be able to ask a group member to just summarize what you talked about then or skip this question.

Possible Answers: Some are persecuted for their faith in Christ. Others may be mocked or judged for their beliefs and the way they live. Following Christ is not easy - it involves sacrifice, sanctification, and obedience. These things can be tiring and difficult.

Several OT passages compare faithful Israel with a green and fruitful plant (Isa. 5:1, Jer. 11:16, Hos. 14:8), while unfaithful Israel is described as dry and unfruitful (Isa. 37:27, Hos. 9:16, Joel 1:12, Nah. 1:10). Interpreted against this background of OT ideas, the metaphor of the dry wood that burns quickly 'intensifies the terribleness of the prospective judgment' and 'also points out the moral and theological basis for the judgment'. If God allows Jesus, who is innocent, the 'green wood,' to suffer the fate that Jerusalem is preparing for him, what will be the fate of Jerusalem, the 'dry wood'?
—*Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Edited by D. A. Carson & G.K. Beale

The Religious Leaders' Responses (Vs. 35)

? What could these Jews have been referring to when they said, "He saved others"?

Possible Answers: The religious leaders are still looking for proof that Jesus was the Messiah. They saw Him heal people and even raise people from the dead, and yet in this moment He does not use His powers to save Himself. Even in this last moment they are looking for Him to use violence and power to overthrow the Romans. They were not looking for a Messiah to suffer and die.

? Do you think they would have believed Jesus was the Messiah if He did come down off the cross? Why?

Possible Answers: There may have been some who believed, but He still would have had to die at some point, and then people would not have believed that He was the Messiah if He died. There were plenty of miracles that Jesus performed during His ministry, and they were never convinced because of them.

The Roman Soldiers' Responses (Vv. 36-37)

? Why would the Roman soldiers mock Jesus in verses 36-37?

Possible Answers: Even though they have no understanding of the religious implications surrounding the crucifixion of Christ, they understood what it meant to be a leader or a king, and no king who was worthy of honor would be crucified.

? Both the religious leaders' and the Roman soldiers' responses question Jesus' identity as Messiah and His power and ability to save. In what areas of or situations in your own life do you have a difficult time recognizing Jesus as Messiah or seeing His power at work?

The Criminals' Responses (Vv. 39-43)

? What's the difference between the two criminals' responses?

Possible Answers: The first criminal insults Jesus and questions His identity as the Messiah. The second criminal acknowledges Jesus as God and fears Him.

? Why do you think Jesus responds favorably to the second criminal?

Possible Answers: The second criminal recognizes that he deserves death and recognizes that Jesus doesn't. He also seeks Jesus in asking Him to remember him when He comes into His kingdom, also illustrating that he sees Jesus as Lord or King.

? How does seeing death as our just punishment change our posture toward Jesus?

Leader's Note: Definition of "just": agreeing with what is considered morally right or good, treating people in a way that is considered morally right, reasonable or proper, being what is merited (Merriam-Webster.com).

Possible Answers: It causes us to view ourselves soberly and humbly and recognize our need for Jesus, which drives us to seek Him constantly and not strive after our own initiatives or desires.

Joseph's Response (Vv. 50-53)

? Joseph was highly respected and honored by society at this time. What did he risk by asking Pilate for Jesus' body and properly burying Him?

Possible Answer: Joseph risked his reputation, honor, prestige, friends or family relationships, and potentially his job.

? How might God be calling you to respond right now to the reality that Christ died on the cross for us? What are you afraid to risk in order to respond in that way?

Each evangelist speaks of Joseph in high terms, and each in his own way. "Luke styles him 'a counsellor, good and just;' he is the καλὸς κἀγαθός, the Greek ideal. Mark calls him 'an honourable counsellor,' the Roman ideal. Matthew writes of him as 'a rich man:' is not this the Jewish ideal?" (Godet). And St. John, we might add, chooses another title for this loved man, "being a disciple of Jesus:" this was St. John's ideal. - *The Pulpit Commentary*

For Discussion and Application

? Which of these responses most closely resembles you at times - good or bad? How do you tend to act like that individual when things are not going the way you wished they would?

? In what ways do you think God is asking you to bear your cross? In what ways can our small group help you with this burden?