**Learn in Community**

 Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**Who is Jesus?**

“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” ([John 3:16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn3.16))

*If you asked your friends and family to name one of the most influential people in history who also claimed to be God, one name would likely come up the most—Jesus. When you consider Jesus’ unquestionable impact on history* and *the radical claim He made about himself, it becomes crystal clear: Jesus is not a person you can just overlook. Every person must have an informed opinion of this man.*

*So, who is Jesus? In the classic book* Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis reasoned that those who refuse to believe His claim to be God are left with the option of labeling Him as a lunatic or the devil. Jesus asked His closest followers who people thought He was (*[*Matthew 16:13*](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt16.13)*). The disciples responded with far-ranging opinions. But then, in verse* [*15*](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt16.15)*, Jesus turned the question on them: “Who do you say I am?” Two thousand years later, there may not be a more important question for any of us to answer. Who is Jesus?*

*Maybe you’ve wondered if Jesus really is who He claimed to be. Are the historical claims about Him true? Maybe you’ve wondered if Jesus really is the Perfect Sacrifice who will forgive your sins.*

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| *First time leading* Learn *for Adults? Check out the* [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf)*.* |

*To access session content and videos from a computer, visit:* [*BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads*](http://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**Share about a sacrifice you made in your life in order to achieve something important to you. Was it worth it? Why or why not? |

We’re all familiar with the concept of sacrifice. Maybe you’re trying to get healthier (again!). So you sacrifice eating whatever and whenever you want for the hope of fitting into your favorite jeans. Some people sacrifice their free time to improve as a basketball player, violinist, or student. Sadly, some people sacrifice time with their families for success and wealth.

Today we’re talking about the most important sacrifice of all time. Jesus came to earth with a mission. His mission was to reveal the Father, announce the kingdom of God, and save humankind. His work became complete through His sacrifice on a cross. And Jesus is the Perfect Sacrifice.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to this question: What impacts you the most as you think about Jesus’ crucifixion?



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| **QUESTION**What impacts you the most as you think about Jesus’ crucifixion? |

**Consider What the Bible Says**

In the video, we heard that Jesus had come to be more than just a teacher. Jesus was a wonderful teacher, but you and I need so much more. A teacher helps us learn what we’re doing right and what we’re doing wrong. But we already knew a lot about right and wrong because God gave His law to His people. Our problem was that we couldn’t provide the perfect sacrifice God required. Only a perfect person could provide that. Thankfully what God required, He provided in Jesus.

**Jesus Was the Sinless Sacrifice**

Read [John 19:1–6](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn19.1-6).

Before this passage, Jesus had been arrested and questioned by the Jewish religious leadership. All of their accusations fell short. But they hated Jesus so much that they made up criminal charges and dragged Him off to the local Roman governor, Pilate. The Jews had no legal right to execute someone, so they needed to involve the Roman government. Even Pilate knew that Jesus had done nothing wrong, let alone commit a crime deserving death.

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think the religious leaders hated Jesus and wanted Him to be executed? |

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| **QUESTION**What are some ways Jesus is still a threat to religious people? |

Jesus was innocent, but even more so—He was sinless. He had never sinned with His actions, His words, or even His motivations. This is so important for you and me because His perfect, sinless life is the only thing that could be sacrificed to atone for our imperfect, sinful life. We needed His sinless perfection to be given for us.

**Did You Know?**

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| Jesus’ popularity probably inspired the religious leaders to try to catch Him in a sneakier way. Rather than publicly arresting this beloved Teacher and risking outrage, they plotted to seize Him at night. To do this, they needed someone close to Jesus to betray His location. They paid one of His disciples, Judas, to be the informant. This attempt to keep the death of Jesus in secrecy was a massive failure. His death is one of the most well-known executions in human history. |

**Jesus Was the Sacrifice for Sinners**

Read [John 19:16–19](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn19.16-19).

Jesus was executed between two thieves. Crucifixion was a horrible death marked by extreme pain, humiliation, and suffering. It was reserved for the worst of criminals. The public nature of it served as a warning to other potential criminals.

It’s fitting that Jesus died between two sinners because Jesus was dying *for* sinners. Years later, the apostle Paul would write that Jesus became our sin, so we could be made right with God ([2 Corinthians 5:21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Co5.21)). Jesus chose to be sacrificed in our place.

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| **QUESTION**What about the scene of Jesus’ death on the cross is most impactful for you? |

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| **QUESTION**How does knowing what Jesus willingly endured for you impact how you see His love for you? |

**Jesus Was the Final Sacrifice**

Read [John 19:28–30](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn19.28-30).

It’s worth noting that Jesus did not say, “I am finished.” If you know the rest of the story, He was far from finished. Jesus said, “It is finished.” In a sense, the work He had come to do was finished, but even more so His sacrificial work was finished. It was complete.

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| **QUESTION**How do we try to add to Jesus’ sacrifice with our own efforts? |

Nothing was lacking in Jesus’ sacrifice. No more sacrifices would be needed. The sacrificial system seen in the Old Testament was now obsolete. His sacrifice was final and enough for us all ([Hebrews 10:14](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Heb10.14)). There is nothing you and I need to do (or can do!) to add to what Jesus accomplished for us.

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| **QUESTION**What is one way you can express your gratitude to Jesus for His perfect and final sacrifice? |

**Reflect**

**Jesus Is the Perfect Sacrifice**

Jesus said no one could take His life from Him, but He would voluntarily sacrifice it ([John 10:18](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn10.18)). As He was beaten, whipped, and mocked, it may have looked like Jesus was an unwilling victim. At the cross, it looked as if He was being killed by Roman soldiers. But Jesus was a willing sacrifice who chose the moment He gave up His spirit. Jesus chose to die for you and me. The Jewish leaders, Pilate, and the soldiers all played their roles, but ultimately Jesus chose to be the Perfect Sacrifice.

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

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| **QUESTION**How would you explain Jesus’ sacrifice to someone else? |

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| **QUESTION**We’re all sinners who need a perfect sacrifice. How can this prevent you from comparing yourself to others who you may have seen as better or worse than you? |

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| **QUESTION**What attitudes or behaviors stand in the way of you living life as Jesus lived? |

**Activate**

Following the tragic events of 9/11 in the United States, stories surfaced about people who survived when the World Trade Center buildings collapsed. One theme that emerged from the survivors was: *When you know you shouldn’t be alive, it changes how you live*. The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross must be more than just a moving story to us. This sacrifice requires something of all who believe. You and I do not deserve to be alive and filled with hope for eternity, but we are. And that must change how we live.

**Challenge**

In the light of Jesus’ sacrifice, what is one thing He is asking you to sacrifice? You may need to give up a bad habit, break off an unhealthy relationship, or make a financial gift to your church or a ministry. Identify one sacrifice you can make this week—and make it. Don’t do this to attempt to earn God’s love or even to prove your love for God. Do this because God’s love is freely yours. Let your worshipful response be one of sacrifice.

**Prayer Requests**

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| Note any requests from the group and remember to pray for them during the week. |

Before next time, continue to spend time in God’s Word with the personal devotions.

**What We Believe**

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| **The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ**The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has always existed. He too is without beginning or end ([Revelation 1:8](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Re1.8)). In order to complete His earthly sacrificial mission, He became human by being born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit ([Matthew 1:23](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt1.23); [Luke 1:31](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk1.31), [35](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk1.35)). He lived a perfect life, absolutely without sin ([Hebrews 7:26](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Heb7.26); [1 Peter 2:22](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Pe2.22)). While on earth, He worked many miracles through the anointing of the Holy Spirit ([Acts 2:22](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac2.22); [10:38](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac10.38)). In order to restore fallen humankind, He died on the Cross as a substitute for the sins of every person ([1 Corinthians 15:3](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Co15.3); [2 Corinthians 5:21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Co5.21)). |
| **The Significance of This Doctrine**The supernatural birth of Jesus, His sinless life, His working of miracles, all give proof that He is the divine Son of God who came to earth in human form to give himself as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. No death of a natural human could provide forgiveness of sin and offer salvation for all humanity. |

**Learn on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: Jesus Is the Perfect Sacrifice**

Read [John 19:1–6](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn19.1-6), [16–19](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn19.16-19), [28–30](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn19.28-30).

Look back over Learn in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

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| **QUESTION**What is God saying to you about the significance of Jesus’ choice to be our Perfect Sacrifice? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 2: His Sacrifice Was Motivated by Joy**

Read [Hebrews 12:1–3](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Heb12.1-3).

In this passage, the author of Hebrews is motivating believers to run life’s race with endurance. Our motivation for doing this is found in verse [2](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Heb12.2): Keep your eyes on Jesus! The answer isn’t to keep your eyes on the goal or keep your eyes on yourself. It’s not to keep your eyes on those running with you. None of these things are our hope for they can fail us. Instead, look at Jesus and all that He endured. And look at why He endured it! He focuses on the joy of doing His Father’s will, which resulted in saving you and me.

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| **QUESTION**Can you recall a time when you joyfully made a sacrifice for someone you loved? |

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| **QUESTION**What role should joy have in the sacrifices we make to serve and follow Jesus? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 3: All Sacrifice Is Costly**

Read [2 Samuel 24:18–25](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Sa24.18-25).

King David committed a sin against God and the people. As a consequence, God allowed a plague that killed thousands of Israelites. At the advice of the prophet Gad, David decided to build an altar to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings to God. Araunah was more than willing to give his land to the king for building an altar, but David refused the offer. He insisted that he pay for it. David was unwilling to offer to God something that cost him nothing. In this passage, we learn something very important about sacrifice: It is always costly.

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| **QUESTION**Araunah offered the land for free. Do you think it was necessary for David to reject that offer? Why or why not? |

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| **QUESTION**What costly sacrifice have you made recently for Jesus? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 4: His Sacrifice Is Received by Faith**

Read [Romans 3:21–31](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro3.21-31).

In Romans, Paul is presenting the gospel in all its power and beauty. Until this passage, Paul has made a compelling case for why we can’t make ourselves righteous. We all need the righteousness of God that comes through Jesus. Read verses [23–26](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro3.23-26) again. This is a beautiful summary of the gospel: We have sinned and fallen short of God’s standard, but God provided Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins. We can be made right by placing our faith in Jesus. His sacrifice made the way for our salvation.

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| **QUESTION**Which phrase in this passage means the most to you and why? |

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| **QUESTION**What does it mean to place your faith in Jesus? |

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| **QUESTION**What evidence can others see that you’ve placed your faith in Jesus more than in things or people? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 5: The Sacrifice Is Provided**

Read [Genesis 22:1–14](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ge22.1-14).

Abraham was one hundred years old when he had a son with his wife Sarah. Isaac was that son—the fulfillment of God’s promise. Many years before, God had promised Abraham many descendants. So God’s instruction to sacrifice Isaac must have made no sense to Abraham. Yet amazingly, he obeyed and trusted God during the three-day journey to the place of sacrifice. And in a moment of beautiful foreshadowing of Jesus, God provided a ram to be sacrificed in Isaac’s place. Abraham proved that he would trust and obey God at all times and with all things—even his own precious son.

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| **QUESTION**How does the ram in this story foreshadow Jesus as our sacrifice? |

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| **QUESTION**What do you think was the most challenging for Abraham as he carried out this terrible task? |