

Session 3 – The Suffering Jesus

LEADER'S NOTES

Gathering (5 mins)

Welcome the group back for session 3. If anyone is new to the group, make sure everyone introduces themselves. Ask if anyone has any reflections on last week's session.

Prayer (3 mins)

Leave a short time of silence for people to gather their thoughts and then open with this or another prayer:

Heavenly Father,
you reveal yourself to us in your Son Jesus Christ.
We thank you for this precious time of prayer and study.
As we attend to your Word and listen to each other,
help us to learn more about your Son Jesus
and come to a deeper understanding of his saving work
Above all help us to know him for ourselves,
to love him,
to trust him,
and to offer him our hearts.
For you live and reign with Him and the Holy Spirit.
One god For ever and ever.
Amen.

Introduction (2 mins)

Introduce the session in these or other words.

A reminder that in this course we want to do two things.

First we want to know *about* Jesus, in other words grow in our understanding of who he is, what he has come to do and how he sets us free.

But second we want to *know* Jesus, in other words explore what it means to be in a deeper relationship with him and to offer our whole lives to him

This week our theme is the Suffering Jesus. This may be a more challenging session for many of you as we tackle such a tricky theme. Remember it is totally up to you what you share and how you share it. And please do talk to me if you need any extra support after this session.

Bible Study (10 mins)

This week's passage is from Acts Chapter 7 verses 54 to 60. It tells the story of the first Christian martyr, Stephen.

Read the passage slowly and clearly.

⁵⁴When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. ⁵⁵But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' ⁵⁷But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. ⁵⁸Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' ⁶⁰Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died.

Ask the following questions or others as you see fit:

- Why do you think the crowds decided to stone Stephen?
- Is there anything in Stephen's death that reminds you of the death of Jesus?
- Stephen dies forgiving his tormentors. What do you think makes him able to do this?

Video (15 mins)

Now watch the video. It can be seen on the Diocesan Website or on the Fruitful app.

The text of the talk is also on the Fruitful app if you are struggling with the technology.

Discussion – Reflecting on the Talk (30 mins)

These questions are intended to prompt conversation. You don't need to use all of them and you may have better questions that you think of yourself. Just go with the flow of the conversation and pick out the questions you most like.

- What struck you in that talk? Did anything challenge you?
- Why does God allow suffering? If you were asked that question by a friend, how might you answer it?
- Are you able to share a time in your life when you felt the closeness of the suffering Jesus?

- Is there a time in your life when you have had an especially deep awareness of the depth of Jesus' love for you?
- What gives you strength to support a friend or family member in a time of suffering?
- How does it change the way you today live to know that one day, through Jesus, all suffering will be destroyed?

Hymn or Song (10 mins)

It really helps some people to reflect on the words of a well-known hymn or song. Either play the hymn or song, sing it or read it out.

This week's hymn is When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.

There is a traditional version [here](#).

Or for a more contemporary feel and a beautiful tune you can listen [here](#).

Afterwards ask people to reflect on a word or expression which especially spoke to them about knowing Jesus.

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it Lord that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flowed mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

*His dying crimson, like a rose,
Spreads o'er His body on the tree;
Then am I dead to all the world,
And all the world is dead to me.*

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Prayer (10 mins)

Close with a time of prayer.

- *You can devise your own. If you are in the Diocese of Blackburn, try and incorporate the Diocesan Centenary Prayer which is below.*
- *A daytime group could end with Prayer during the Day which can be found [here](#).*
- *An evening group could end with Compline which is printed below:*

Preparation

The Lord almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end.
Amen.

Our help is in the name of the Lord
who made heaven and earth.

*A period of silence for reflection on the past day may follow.
The following or other suitable words of penitence may be used*

**Most merciful God,
we confess to you,
before the whole company of heaven and one another,
that we have sinned in thought, word and deed
and in what we have failed to do.
Forgive us our sins,
heal us by your Spirit
and raise us to new life in Christ. Amen.**

O God, make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

The Word of God

Psalmody

One of the following psalms may be used.

Psalm 4

- 1 Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness;
you set me at liberty when I was in trouble;
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.
- 2 How long will you nobles dishonour my glory;
how long will you love vain things and seek after falsehood?
- 3 But know that the Lord has shown me his marvellous kindness;
when I call upon the Lord, he will hear me.
- 4 Stand in awe, and sin not;
commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.
- 5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness
and put your trust in the Lord.
- 6 There are many that say, 'Who will show us any good?'
Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us.
- 7 You have put gladness in my heart,
more than when their corn and wine and oil increase.
- 8 In peace I will lie down and sleep,
for it is you Lord, only, who make me dwell in safety.

Psalm 91 verses 1-7

- 1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
and abides under the shadow of the Almighty,
- 2 Shall say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my stronghold,
my God, in whom I put my trust.'
- 3 For he shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence.
- 4 He shall cover you with his wings
and you shall be safe under his feathers;
his faithfulness shall be your shield and buckler.

5 You shall not be afraid of any terror by night,
nor of the arrow that flies by day;

6 Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
nor of the sickness that destroys at noonday.

7 Though a thousand fall at your side
and ten thousand at your right hand,
yet it shall not come near you.

Psalm 134

1 Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, ♦
you that by night stand in the house of the Lord.

2 Lift up your hands towards the sanctuary ♦
and bless the Lord.

3 The Lord who made heaven and earth ♦
give you blessing out of Zion.

At the end of the psalmody, the following is said or sung

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Scripture Reading

⁵⁹ While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died.

Acts 7, 59-60

Silence is kept

Responsory

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.
Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

For you have redeemed me, Lord God of truth.

I commend my spirit.

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Keep me as the apple of your eye.

Hide me under the shadow of your wings.

The Gospel Canticle

The Nunc dimittis (The Song of Simeon) is said

**All Save us, O Lord, while waking,
and guard us while sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ
and asleep may rest in peace.**

1 Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace:
your word has been fulfilled.

2 My own eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared in the sight of every people;

3 A light to reveal you to the nations
and the glory of your people Israel.

Luke 2.29-32

**All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

**All Save us, O Lord, while waking,
and guard us while sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ
and asleep may rest in peace.**

The Prayers

Intercessions and thanksgivings may be offered here.

The Collect

Visit this place, O Lord, we pray,
and drive far from it the snares of the enemy;

may your holy angels dwell with us and guard us in peace,
and may your blessing be always upon us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Diocesan Centenary Prayer (for those in the Diocese of Blackburn)

Heavenly Father,
in our Centenary year
we rededicate ourselves and our Diocese to you.
Send the Holy Spirit to give us
confidence in our witness,
generosity in our service,
and love for our neighbours,
that your Church may be renewed
and many come home to you,
through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer ([here](#)) may be said.

The Conclusion

In peace we will lie down and sleep;
for you alone, Lord, make us dwell in safety.

Abide with us, Lord Jesus,
for the night is at hand and the day is now past.

As the night watch looks for the morning,
so do we look for you, O Christ.

The Lord bless us and watch over us;
the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us;
the Lord look kindly on us and give us peace.

Amen.