

Small Group Guide: The Cruciformed Life

Week 1 - 1 Corinthians | What Does the Cross Mean to Us?

Overview

This week's sermon launched a new series called "The Cruciformed Life," a study through the book of 1 Corinthians. The central question of the series is not simply whether we wear a cross or display one, but whether our lives are actually shaped by the cross of Christ. The sermon explored how three groups in the first century -- Jews, Greeks, and Romans -- each rejected the cross for different reasons, and challenged us to consider what the cross truly means to us today.

Key Takeaways

- The word "cruciformed" means to be shaped or arranged in the form of a cross. The deeper question is not whether objects around us take the shape of a cross, but whether our lives do.
- Jesus called His followers to take up their cross and follow Him -- a statement that would have been deeply offensive, even scandalous, to His original audience.
- To the Jews, the cross was a stumbling block -- a symbol of failure, defeat, and God's curse.
- To the Greeks, the cross was foolishness -- incompatible with their pursuit of wisdom, happiness, virtue, or escape from societal norms.
- To the Romans, the cross was a tool of power and dominance -- reserved for the weak and the conquered.
- God intentionally works through what the world considers foolish and weak to shame the wise and the strong, so that no one may boast except in the Lord.
- The cross reveals the character of God: strength expressed through servanthood, power displayed through humility, and love demonstrated through self-sacrifice.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. The sermon began with a simple observation -- cross-shaped objects are all around us in everyday life. Before this sermon, had you ever stopped to notice them? What does it say about our culture that the cross is everywhere, yet its meaning is so often overlooked?
2. When you hear the phrase "take up your cross and follow Me," what has that phrase meant to you in the past? Has your understanding of it changed or deepened over time?

Going Deeper

3. The sermon described how the cross was a stumbling block to the Jews because a crucified Savior looked like an unsuccessful one. In what ways do people today -- or even we ourselves -- still struggle with the idea of a Savior who chose weakness over power?
4. Four ancient Greek philosophies were discussed: Platonism, Cynicism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism. Which of these ways of thinking do you see most reflected in the culture around you today? Which, if you are honest, do you find yourself tempted by?

5. The sermon pointed out that God chose the foolish, the weak, the lowly, and the despised to shame the wise and the strong. Why do you think God works this way? What does it say about His character?
6. The sermon described the physical suffering of crucifixion in significant detail. How does understanding what Jesus actually endured on the cross affect the way you think about His sacrifice? Does it change anything for you personally?
7. The pastor said this about what we see when we look at the cross: "We see a way of life. We see the wisdom of God in the weakness of the cross. We see forgiveness of God in the fragility of the cross. We see the power of God in the perseverance of Jesus. We see the honor of God in the humility of the cross." Which of these stands out most to you right now, and why?
8. Jesus said that whoever wants to be great must become a servant, and whoever wants to be first must become a slave. Where in your own life is this the hardest to live out?

Personal Reflection

9. The sermon drew a distinction between wearing a cross and living a cruciformed life. On a practical, day-to-day level, what do you think it actually looks like to live a life shaped by the cross?
10. The pastor closed in prayer by confessing a personal tendency to chase after "power, position, popularity, and physical pleasures." Is there an area of your life where you sense God calling you to lay something down and take up your cross instead?

Practical Applications

- **Observe and reflect.** This week, every time you notice a cross-shaped object in your daily routine, use it as a brief moment to ask yourself: Is my life being shaped by what this symbol represents?
- **Read and study.** Begin reading 1 Corinthians on your own this week to prepare your heart for the rest of this series. Pay particular attention to chapters 1 and 2 as a companion to this week's sermon.
- **Identify your philosophy.** Consider which of the four Greek philosophies -- the desire to escape, the pursuit of happiness, the drive for personal virtue, or the rejection of authority -- most influences the way you make decisions. Bring your honest reflection to God in prayer.
- **Serve someone this week.** Identify one specific, practical way you can serve someone in your life without recognition or reward. Do it as an act of worship, a small expression of the cruciformed life.
- **Memorize a key verse.** Commit 1 Corinthians 1:18 to memory this week. Reflect on what it means that the message of the cross is the power of God to those who are being saved.

Closing Prayer

Close your group time by praying together. You may use the pastor's closing prayer as a guide, asking God to correct any wrong understanding of His character, to free each group member from chasing after things that do not matter, and to shape every life represented in your group into the likeness of Christ through the way of the cross.