**CROSSWORDS | Forgive Them | Week 1 | February 29 & March 1**

Luke 23:1-38

These study guides are designed for individual or group study but highly encouraged to be experienced in community with a small group or other friends on the journey with Jesus.

Context: Over the coming weeks we will look at the final statements Jesus makes in His last days on Earth. These statements will not only confirm his remarkable character, but these statements also reveal a pathway for us to find life abundant and eternal. Even in his dying, Jesus shows us how to really live.

- Have you been with someone during the final moments of life? How has it impacted your life? Journal or tell the group about your experience.

Expected to Snarl: Cicero reported that sometimes those crucified had their tongues cut out to stop their blasphemies and their curses on those officials who convicted them. Others were said to curse their life in despair. In every case there was an expectation of desperate behavior from those crucified. Read Luke 32:1-38.

- Outline the events that are described. Imagine the groups of people on the scene and describe their attitudes. What is fueling these attitudes?
- What groups of people are at the foot of the cross? Why are they there?
- What do you think they expect?

How can He go through this? There were three there that knew Jesus well, "the woman who'd born him, the questionable woman to whom he'd extended grace, and the beloved disciple named John".

- When you are attending to a loved one in pain and suffering and you are deeply grieved and despairing over the loss unfolding before you, what goes through your heart and mind?
- What would be your overwhelming desire in this situation at the foot of the cross? Why?
- What do you believe was on their hearts and minds? Why?

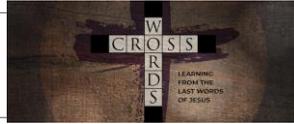
Words of Life out of Death: Read Luke 23:34. With the integrity of all that Jesus said he was, Jesus responds to the situation, to the injustice, to the mockery, to the loss of life; with grace and love and pardon.

- In the face of the expectation discussed before, what do you imagine the impact of these words might be for those present?
- How would the "crowd" hear these words? Could they understand?
- How would the Scribes and Pharisees react? They would know the significance in their head—he had not forsaken his teaching—but did it impact their heart?
- How do you hear these words here and now? How do they impact your life today?

Mercy and Grace: Pastor Dan considers three aspects of these words in Luke 23:34:

UNNATURAL: Recount Pastor Dan's descriptions of our natural human responses.

- What is the natural response that everyone expected from Jesus?
- What is the tension here? How are we asked to respond? How can we overcome our natural human responses? What do you believe Jesus invites us into as a way of life?



UNCONDITIONAL: Jesus forgiveness was (and is) real and absolute.

- Our natural way would be to list some conditions—if this, then I will forgive. Give an example from your life this week where you have done (or thought) conditional forgiveness.
- Imagine giving unconditional forgiveness in a life situation you are experiencing now. What comes up in you as you think about that?

UNDERSTANDING: Jesus knows us, He knows what we need

- “They know NOT”...is there a better description of our humanness? Recount a case where you really did not know but that you now understand. Maybe the impact of anger on your relationships or the impact of jealousy on your behavior toward others.....how did the learning change you?
- What if you came to “know” but did not choose to change? Is that possible?

Will You? Jesus dying words on the cross showed the integrity of his character in death for all to see.

They also give us words for life. Pastor Dan asks “will you seek this life?”

- What does abandoning your “natural right” look like in your life this week?
- Talk about a place this week, you will seek to live into the words of Jesus, by God’s grace. Pray for each other as a group for wisdom and grace to the then live the way of Jesus into those very places.

Practice of the week: Sign up to receive our weekly Lenten Audio Devotionals by texting "LENT" to 630.206.3230.

Our Lenten journey this year takes a reflective walk through the last words of Jesus. To help create space for these words in our lives we are providing weekly audio experiences, engaging us with various spiritual practices leading you to slow down. To listen. To hear Christ's words deeply and soulfully. As you do, may you hear the words of Jesus drawing you towards resurrection even as He breathes His last.

We’d love to hear from you!

If you have thoughts, questions, comments, ideas on how to make these study guides more meaningful for you or your small group, please let us know.

We also enjoy hearing how God is using these study guides in your lives.

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