**CROSSWORDS | You Will Be With Me | Week 2 | March 7 & 8**

Luke 23:39-43

*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 seven statements Jesus makes while in the narrows of the cross. These reveal 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.

- What cross are you carrying right now? How is it impacting your relationship with your family, yourself, or with Jesus?

**An Attitude or an Angle?:** Read Luke 23:39. He taunted Jesus “Hey, aren’t you the Messiah? If you are prove it—save yourself and us.” A ploy of a manipulator that might have worked in the circles he ran in. Or maybe it was just the Attitude of Heart that dominated this criminal’s life. Pastor Dan used three words: cynicism, blindness and selfishness to describe this first criminal.

- What strikes you about this individual hanging on his cross next to the Messiah?
- How have you ever seen or experienced this kind of blind, selfish behavior by others in your life?
- When have you exhibited similar behavior? What helped you to notice and address it?

**Cynicism:** Pastor Dan talked about cynicism mocking any idea of absolute authority, or any conception that rules other than “MY” rules mattered.

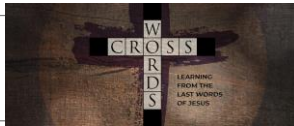
- Talk about how a cynical heart can poison life.
- How have you addressed cynicism in some area of life? Talk about it with the group—help each other see the poison and how to fight it.

**Blindness:** The kind of blindness referred to here is sometimes called filters or lenses that we see life through. Certainly, the criminal was blind to the significance of the person next to him.

- What lens was he looking through?
- What kind of things get in your way of seeing rightly on a day to day basis?
- Have you found ways to “see”? Talk about an example where you successfully changed the lens. What helped you to do so?

**Selfish:** Pastor Dan called us to consider how many times we struggle with our own needs and how that interferes with us caring for another. He also challenged us to question how we look at Church and Salvation—is it some kind of right: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Then do your job. Save ME!”

- How do you respond to those ideas?
- Where does selfishness begin? How do we learn to identify it? Wrestle with it a little as you discuss it.



**Barrier or Bridge:** Read Luke 23:39-43. Here we can contrast the two criminals. We have painted the barriers of the first criminal's heart. The second criminal is not blind. His suffering is somehow leading him to clarity (rather than blindness), faith (rather than cynicism) and humility (rather than selfishness). Pastor Dan describes "a bridge to a greater understanding of how completely dependent we have always been upon a Grace that in times of pleasure we too seldom perceive."

- What have you learned from the pain you experienced in your own life?
- What does "dependence" mean to you?

**You will be with Me:** Pastor Dan frames the conclusion this way, "our apparent saintliness is self-deception . . . Christ sees us as human "becomings." Jesus is far less concerned with what our hands have done or failed to do in days gone by than with whose hand we're willing to take as we go from here."

- Will we see, admit and celebrate our complete dependence on Him. Will we "give up"? Will you? What is keeping you from doing so?
- Who can we share this amazing news with and invite them to receive freely what we have freely received from Jesus? Keep a list of family and friends in front of your group or in a journal you are praying for towards this end.

**Practice of the week: *Cross the Line of Faith!*** (If you prayed with Pastor Dan the prayer below at the end of his message (*or now*) to give your life over to Jesus, let us know - we would love to celebrate what God is doing in your life: Send a note to Pastor Eric Haskins at [ehaskins@ChristChurch.us](mailto:ehaskins@ChristChurch.us).

*Lord Jesus, some of us have been living our lives like that first criminal on the cross. We have been cynical about the reality of Your absolute Authority and Goodness, blind to the seriousness of our own moral failures, and more self-absorbed than we may ever understand.*

*Yet Lord Jesus we come to you now like that second sinner, we realize that we are utterly lost, unless somehow You choose to intervene with a grace we could never earn or command. And so, we give up, Lord. We give up our past to you. We give up our self-justifications to you. We give up our sin to you Lord, for we believe you are the only one who can save.*

*You have promised that as we do that right now, our cross will lead to you Jesus. And what has been a barrier before now becomes a bridge. The slate is absolutely clean. The future is absolutely filled with new possibilities. The assurance is absolutely ours that we will be with You for evermore. Thank you, Lord.*

*Now help us to share and extend this amazing grace to our family members, our friends, even those who before this day, we would have gladly nailed to a cross. In, with and by your name Jesus we pray these things. And all God's people said - Amen.*

**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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