

Excruciating

Cries from the Cross

A Seven-Week Lent Study

by

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Introduction

The season of Lent is a forty-day period of time leading up to Resurrection Sunday where Christians from around the world reflect on the sufferings of Christ. By prayer, fasting, giving, and many other disciplines, believers prepare for and look forward to the resurrection of our crucified Lord. This study is designed to aid in that preparation.

The word *excruciating* is a word we sometimes hear in everyday language to describe intense pain. What you may not have thought of or know, is that the word *excruciating* is from the Latin meaning “from the cross”. How incredible to know that the agony endured from the cross would demand a new word to describe such pain.

While Jesus was on the cross, scripture records seven key phrases or moments in which Jesus speaks. Given all that Jesus had already suffered, as well as the punishment and pain Jesus was likely enduring while on the cross, speaking at all would have been difficult. It is my assumption that these statements are more likely *cries* from the cross, and not simply gentle words spoken. Not only are these words of Jesus likely to be cries for physical reasons, but they speak also to the desperation, humanity, sincerity, and the determined assurance of faith Jesus held.

In this study, you will find seven lessons followed by a prayer journal for each given day of the week. Each week will focus specifically on one of those seven sayings of Jesus and will look at the historical, theological, and practical implications surrounding what Jesus said. The study will also pose a few questions to be considered and prayed over. By the end of the Lent season, you will have studied all of Jesus’ words from the cross and will have prayed and/or journaled throughout the season reflecting on His words. This video-driven course is designed for use in a group but can also be used individually. The videos can be found by visiting <https://www.youtube.com/@mzprays> and searching the playlists available for “Excruciating: Cries from the Cross”. May God richly bless your time of repentance, prayer, study, and preparation.

In Christ,

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Week 1: A Cry of Forgiveness

Key Verse:

And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”... (Luke 23:34)

Icebreaker:

In your own words, what does it mean to forgive and be forgiven?

Summary:

Of all the benefits the cross of Christ brings, arguably the most prominent among them is forgiveness. Having ministered with His hands and traveling endlessly on foot, Jesus now had nothing left to give. How fitting then that Jesus, in the midst of being nailed to the cross to suffer and die for us all, would think to offer up first a prayer, a cry of forgiveness.

Video – Click www.youtube.com/@mzprays and search for “Excruciating” under playlists.

Discussion Questions:

Explore the significance of Jesus pleading with the Father to forgive those around Him.

Explore the significance of the role of Jesus as an intercessor (Isa 53:12, Heb. 7:25).

What is it that Jesus meant by “they know not what they do”?

Further discuss or consider the various impacts of sin in our lives and on our world.
(Standing before God, motivations, thinking, emotions, bodies, relationships, the world)

Mercy undergirds forgiveness. How does Jesus live out His own teachings? See Matt. 5:44.

Pray: Lord thank you for loving us when we did not deserve it. Thank you for your forgiveness and for demonstrating for us how to love and forgive others even when we are at our weakest. Help us Lord, to be eager to forgive others who have wronged us and stir within us the conviction to seek the forgiveness of others for whom we have wronged. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Week 1 Prayer Journal – Forgiveness

Thursday, February 23rd

Read Isaiah 53, John 17:20-21, Hebrews 7:25, and Romans 8:31-39. Consider how Jesus intercedes on our behalf and prays for you. Pray for and thank God for His loving kindness toward you.

Friday, February 24th

Read Ephesians 4:32. Pray over a family member or friend whom you know you need to forgive and seek to do so.

Saturday, February 25th

Read Colossians 3:13. Have you been difficult for others to bear lately? Pray for the humility and boldness to approach that person and ask for forgiveness.

Sunday, February 26th

Read Luke 6:37. Pray for forgiveness for the times you harbored a critical and judgmental attitude. Pray that God would replace your heart of stone with a heart of flesh (Ez. 36:26).

Monday, February 27th

Read Matthew 18:21-22. Pray that God would develop in you a posture of forgiveness.

Tuesday, February 28th

Read Colossians 1:13-14. Consider the gift of the cross and the forgiveness it provides. Pray a prayer of gratitude and thanks.

Week 2: A Cry of Assurance

Key Verse:

And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43)

Icebreaker:

Tell of a time when you were told something that brought you the most amount of hope and assurance.

Summary: Sometimes we just need to know that everything will be OK. There is no greater relief than absolute assurance from a trusted source. The thief on the cross realized his own ruin. In repentance he acknowledged the sinlessness of Christ and confessed His Lordship, pleading with Jesus to not forget him. Not only would Jesus not forget him, but a cry of assurance gave confidence to the thief that indeed he would be *with* Him in paradise.

Video – Click www.youtube.com/@mzprays and search for “Excruciating” under playlists.

Discussion Questions:

Explore the significance of Jesus being “numbered with transgressors”. How many times leading up to Jesus’ own death did someone say that Jesus himself was innocent? What is the significance in that?

Read and consider the similarities between Luke 15:11-24 and the words of the thief in Luke 23:39-43. What happened? What similarities and final results do you see?

How have you come to the end of yourself? Was there a life event or a season in time when God made himself clearly known to you?

What did the one thief do or say that would make Jesus respond with these words of assurance? See Luke 23:39-43.

Jesus said that the thief would be with Him in paradise. What would heaven be if not *with* Christ?

Watch - <https://youtu.be/xk9wgJBoEd8>

Pray: Lord thank you for the abundance of your grace and for making it plain to us. May we always be mindful of the assurance of salvation not as a result of our efforts, but as a result of your redeeming love. Amen.

Week 2 Prayer Journal – Assurance

Thursday, March 2nd

Read Romans 10:9-13 and Acts 2:21, 38-39. Pray with boldness a prayer of faith that Jesus is the resurrected Lord of all. Pray for others in your circle and beyond who need to believe, repent, and confess saving faith in Jesus.

Friday, March 3rd

Read John 5:24, 1 John 5:11-13, and Acts 4:12. Pray that the Holy Spirit would illuminate the truth to many that salvation is found in no one else but Jesus.

Saturday, March 4th

Read John 3:16-18 and Romans 8:1. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving to God for loving the world in such a way as to provide for its salvation. Pray that many sinners will come to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Sunday, March 5th

Read Matthew 16:15-17 and John 1:12-13. Thank God for revealing Christ to you and calling you as one of His own.

Monday, March 6th

Read Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-9, and Jeremiah 9:23-24. Pray a prayer of humility, thanking God for the work He has done to bring about your salvation, not by works, but by grace through faith.

Tuesday, March 7th

Read John 10:28, Ephesians 1:13-14, and Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13. Pray a prayer of thanks for the assurance of salvation. Pray that God would continue His work in you and bring it to full completion.

Week 3: A Cry of Love

Key Verse:

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!”²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. (John 19:26-27)

Icebreaker:

Tell of a time you were given a responsibility that you felt unprepared for or undeserving of. Why?

Summary:

All of the disciples initially desert Jesus, but John along with many of the women, would later be found at the site of the crucifixion. John was met by grace, not resentment, and was given an important commission by Jesus to care for His mother. In these moments Jesus’ cry of love teaches an important lesson for us all to honor our mother and father, and never forsake our responsibilities.

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Discussion Questions:

What is your immediate reaction to Jesus’ words to His mother and John?

John returns to Jesus after initially abandoning Him and experienced grace, not resentment (Matt. 26:56). Has there been a time when you remember returning to the open arms of Jesus?

What does it mean to honor a parent? What is the difference between honor and obedience?

Evaluate your call to ministry against the call to be responsible to your family. Are your priorities in the proper place? If not, what needs to change?

The “family of God” is at the heart of Christ’s ministry and in a way was born at the foot of the cross. In your own words, what is the family of God? What scriptures support your claim?

Pray: Father in heaven we thank you for calling us your children and adopting us into your family. May we always be mindful of the example Jesus set before us to honor our parents as he did and furthermore, may we seek to honor you in our daily lives as well. Amen.

Week 3 Prayer Journal – Love

Thursday, March 9th

Read Matthew 26:31, 56, and John 19:25-27. Consider once again how John was met with mercy and grace at the foot of the cross of Jesus. Pray a prayer of repentance and ask God to show you His will for your life.

Friday, March 10th

Read Exodus 20:12, Proverbs 23:22, and Ephesians 6:1-4. Pray on how you can best honor your parents and/or raise your children or future children in such a way so that they honor God, and in so doing, honor you as well.

Saturday, March 11th

Read 1 Timothy 5:3-8. Pray for the health of your family. Pray for God to intervene and help restore broken or stressed relationships. Ask God to show you how you are to care for your own family.

Sunday, March 12th

Read Matthew 22:37, Exodus 20:3, and Psalm 90:12. Many families suffer as a result of dedicated service to the ministry. Ask God for the wisdom to know and balance work for the kingdom and the time necessary with family.

Monday, March 13th

Read Matthew 12:46-49 and Mark 3:31-35. Jesus was respectful of His family while at the same time fully understanding His higher calling, mission, and ministry. Pray to know and do the will of the Father as a brother or sister in Christ.

Tuesday, March 14th

Read John 1:12, 1 John 3:1-3, Ephesians 5:8, and 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving that we are children of God and not of the world; children of light and not of darkness. Pray the Holy Spirit would continue to strengthen you and purify you in the faith as you encourage and build up others as well.

Week 4: A Cry of Despair

Key Verse:

And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46)

Icebreaker:

Tell of a time that you can remember feeling absolutely helpless, left out, or alone.

Summary:

On the cross, Jesus bore not only our sin, but the punishment for our sin as well. That Jesus was “forsaken” by God in these moments testifies to His cry of despair and agony. Scripture affirms however that God has not “turned His face” or abandoned Christ, nor will He abandon you. Furthermore, He hears our cries of despair.

Video – Click www.youtube.com/@mzprays and search for “Excruciating” under playlists.

Discussion Questions:

Review Isaiah 53. What is the role and purpose of the suffering servant? What other scriptures can you share or find to support this role or purpose?

How might the crucifixion be a picture of hell itself?

Carefully review Psalm 22. What phrases or verses stand out in relation to Jesus and His work on the cross and beyond?

Is there a difference between perception and reality? How might that play into what Jesus said on the cross?

Ultimately, why do you think Jesus said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Pray: Lord while we often wrestle with many questions, we are thankful that you have provided the greatest of all answers; Jesus. Thank you for your grace which is rooted in His sacrifice. Amen.

Week 4 Prayer Journal – Despair

Thursday, March 16th

Read Romans 5:1, 6-8, 12, 18-19. Thanks to the willing obedience and sacrifice of Christ, we are forgiven as a result of the redeeming work of Christ. Pray a prayer of thanks for the justifying grace of God.

Friday, March 17th

Read Galatians 3:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:21. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving that Jesus has paid the price of your sin, redeemed you, and gifted you with His righteousness.

Saturday, March 18th

Read Philippians 4:6-7. What are the cries of your heart? Pray a prayer of peace and comfort for those things that make it challenging to know and feel the love of God.

Sunday, March 19th

Read Romans 8:38-39. Pray a prayer of faithfulness and boldness acknowledging that the love of God is inseparable no matter the circumstances of life.

Monday, March 20th

Read Hebrews 13:5-6. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving and contentment for the Lord's provision.

Tuesday, March 21st

Read 1 Peter 5:6-11. Note that God cares for you despite the sufferings we will endure. Consider the sufferings of Christ and pray a prayer for endurance and obedience in the faith as modeled by Christ.

Week 5: A Cry of Humanity

Key Verse:

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."
(John 19:28)

Icebreaker:

Tell of a time you were absolutely famished or thirsty. What did it take to satisfy your craving or quench your thirst and how did you feel as a result?

Summary:

In the wake of a sleepless night, endless torture, and humiliation; Jesus still lived by the word of the Lord. With a cry of thirst, we see too a cry of humanity. In addition, the divinity of Jesus is demonstrated once again as various scriptures are fulfilled.

Video – Click www.youtube.com/@mzprays and search for "Excruciating" under playlists.

Discussion Questions:

Take a moment to consider all of the physical sufferings and hardships Jesus endured from Gethsemane until His final death. What does all of this say about the humanity of Jesus?

What is the significance of Jesus saying He thirsts and being given sour wine to drink?
(See Ps. 22:15 & 69:21) What other verses in Psalm 69 are fulfilled throughout Jesus' suffering?

John articulates the deity and humanity of Jesus to his readers as a defense to the Gnostics. Read 1 John 1:1-4 carefully and identify these elements within John's words. What is the fullness of joy John is speaking of?

Read Revelation 3:20, 7:16-17, and 22:17. What comfort and assurance do these scriptures give you that Jesus wants you to have your thirst quenched by Him and share in His fellowship?

What do you crave? What will it take to hunger and thirst for righteousness all the more?
(See Matthew 5:6)?

Pray: Lord Jesus, we are humbled by your sacrifice. Work deep in our hearts to bring about a deep hunger and thirst for you and your word. Amen.

Week 5 Prayer Journal – Humanity

Thursday, March 23rd

Read Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-5, 14, 1 John 1:1-4, and Colossians 1:15-17. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving that God has revealed to you the truth of the divinity of Jesus.

Friday, March 24th

Read 1 John 4:2. Pray a prayer of confessing faith that Christ has come in the flesh.

Saturday, March 25th

Read Philippians 2:7. Knowing Jesus set aside many of His divine attributes, pray a prayer of thanksgiving for the example of humility Jesus displayed for us. Pray that you too would live your life with great humility before others.

Sunday, March 26th

Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Jesus intercedes for us as high priest and is acquainted with every temptation and grief that we experience. Pray what is on your heart and mind today. Ask Jesus to send the comforter to come by your side to encourage you and direct your next steps.

Monday, March 27th

Read Isaiah 55 and John 7:37-38. The Lord offers a drink to all who are thirsty and bids them come without price. Praise the Lord for His gracious gift. Take a moment to drink on Jesus today. Allow Jesus to hydrate and satisfy a parched and weary soul.

Tuesday, March 28th

Read Psalm 42:1, Psalm 63:1, and Matthew 5:6. Pray that God would give you a hunger and thirst for Him, His word, and His righteousness.

Week 6: A Cry of Completion

Key Verse:

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:30)

Icebreaker:

Apart from faith or family, what is your most cherished personal accomplishment? What did it take to accomplish this task or goal and what was the result to follow?

Summary:

Jesus endured the brutality of scourging, the mockery of the soldiers and crowds, and the agony of the cross. Having fully satisfied the wrath of God following six hours on the cross, Jesus voiced a cry of completion as He proclaimed victory over sin forever.

Video – Click www.youtube.com/@mzprays and search for “Excruciating” under playlists.

Discussion Questions:

How does the death of Jesus finalize the work of the incarnation?

The life, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus fulfilled many scriptures. In addition to what was already spoken, what other prophecies can you (or your group) come up with that Jesus fulfilled? How does this vast number of fulfilled prophecies strengthen or encourage your faith?

Read Isaiah 53:6. What is your response to the fact that God has laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all? How easy is it to take such grace for granted?

Revisit Psalm 22. Knowing that three of the last seven sayings of Jesus are represented in this psalm, do you think it is possible Jesus was reciting this psalm, and if so for what purpose?

Consider how Psalm 22:30-31 and the great commission of Matthew 28:19-20 tie together in light of Jesus’ statement that “it is finished”.

Pray: Lord Jesus, truly your name is the name above every name. Thank you for your obedience and sacrifice on our behalf. May we be humbled and emboldened in light of your sufferings to proclaim your name and your gospel to all the earth that “It Is Finished”. Amen.

Week 6 Prayer Journal – Completion

Thursday, March 30th

Read Genesis 3:15. Praise God for His faithfulness that from the beginning he has made a plan to crush the head of the serpent.

Friday, March 31st

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18, 15:3-4. Pray for those who see Christianity as foolishness. Pray that they would come to understand the saving power of God made possible through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Saturday, April 1st

Read 1 Peter 2:24. Pray a prayer of how you are to die to sin and live righteously for God. Pray for those sins in your life that need to come to an end; that are to be “finished”.

Sunday, April 2nd

Romans 6:1-14. Pray a prayer of repentance. Pray that you do not intentionally abuse the grace of God by continuing in known sinful behavior.

Monday, April 3rd

Read Galatians 2:20. Pray on how you are to lay your life down and live for Jesus Christ in light of His suffering death on the cross.

Tuesday, April 4th

Read Psalm 22. Note the end of the psalm. Pray for this current generation and generations to come. Pray that they would come to saving faith and know with certainty in their soul that “Jesus has done it”!

Week 7: A Cry of Submission

Key Verse:

Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last. (Luke 23:46)

Icebreaker:

Tell of a time when you have relinquished total control of a situation. How did you feel?

Summary:

The final cry of Jesus is a cry of submission as He willingly gives up His spirit and entrusts it to the Father. These last words of Jesus also serve to demonstrate His contentment, faith, love, and confidence in the Father.

Video – Click www.youtube.com/@mzprays and search for “Excruciating” under playlists.

Discussion Questions:

What thoughts or emotions arise when you read and think about Jesus’ final words and how he said them? If you gave your last breath today or tonight, would this be your testimony?

Discuss the uniqueness and significance of the number 7 in the scriptures.

Review Psalm 31:1-5 and discuss its connection to the final words and moments of Jesus.

What significance is there, if any, that Jesus “gave up” His spirit?

Jesus was confident that the father would receive His spirit. How confident are you to trust Him to do the same? What fears, worries, or doubts linger and why? Pray for one another on these things.

Pray: Lord, as we conclude this study and put it to rest, we are minded of how you faithfully accomplished all that the Father sent for you to do and having done so, you too entered into your rest. Give us the boldness of faith and peace of mind to do the same as our final day draws near. Amen.

Week 7 Prayer Journal – Submission

Thursday, April 6th

Read John 10:18 and Matthew 26:36-56. Pray a prayer of thanks that Jesus willingly surrendered His life for the salvation of us all.

Friday, April 7th

Read the accounts of the crucifixion again in Matthew 26-27, Mark 15, Luke 23, and John 19. Pray a prayer of repentance from sin today as you remember the sufferings of the Savior.

Saturday, April 8th

Read Matthew 27:62-66. The chief priests and Pharisees accused Jesus and His disciples of being frauds, and had Pilate set guards over the tomb to ensure the body of Jesus could not be stolen. Pray for those who are under the fraud of the devil, who has hidden from their eyes the truth of the crucified and risen Savior.

Sunday, April 9th

Read the resurrection accounts of Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20 as well as 1 Peter 1:3-9. Pray a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for the risen Savior and salvation of our souls.

Hallelujah!

It is finished!