

# Small Group Discussion Guide

## "Crucified, Died, and Buried"

*Based on 1 Corinthians 15:1-6 and the Apostles' Creed*

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### Opening (10 minutes)

#### Welcome & Check-In

- **Icebreaker:** Share one thing you're grateful for from this past week.
- **Prayer:** Ask someone to open in prayer, thanking God for His presence and asking for open hearts.

#### Context Setting

**Leader says:** "Today we're discussing the central message of Christianity - the death of Jesus Christ. This can be heavy material, but it's also the source of our greatest hope. Let's approach this with both honesty about the weight of sin and joy about God's incredible love."

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### Opening Discussion (15 minutes)

#### Question 1: The Gospel Foundation

*"Paul emphasized that the gospel message - Christ's death, burial, and resurrection - was 'the most important thing' he received and passed on."*

#### Discussion Questions:

- If a non-Christian friend asked you to explain Christianity in 2-3 sentences, what would you say?
- What parts of the gospel message do you find easy to explain? What parts are harder?
- How has your understanding of the gospel changed over the years?

**Leader Note:** Help the group articulate the gospel clearly. This sets the foundation for the rest of the discussion.

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## **Main Discussion (45 minutes)**

### **Section 1: The Reality of the Cross (15 minutes)**

**Scripture Reading:** Have someone read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

**Question 2: Historical Certainty** *"The sermon provided extensive evidence that Jesus actually died - Romans, Jews, and disciples all agreed He was dead."*

- How important is historical evidence to your personal faith?
- Do you ever doubt the reality of Jesus' death and resurrection? What strengthens your confidence?
- Share about a time when you wrestled with doubts about your faith. How did you work through them?

### **Section 2: Personal Responsibility (15 minutes)**

**Scripture Reading:** Have someone read Isaiah 53:4-6

**Question 3: "We All Killed Jesus"** *"The sermon stated that while historically Pilate killed Jesus, spiritually we all did through our sins."*

- How do you react to the idea that your sins contributed to Jesus' death?
- Ken mentioned we often think we're "pretty good people" or "not as bad as others." How do you struggle with comparing yourself to others?
- What helps you acknowledge your need for forgiveness without being overwhelmed by guilt?

**Leader Note:** This can be sensitive. Emphasize both the reality of sin and the hope of forgiveness. Don't let anyone spiral into shame.

### **Section 3: God's Love and Our Response (15 minutes)**

**Scripture Reading:** Have someone read John 10:17-18

**Question 4: The Willing Sacrifice** *"Jesus said 'No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily.'"*

- How does knowing Jesus chose to die for you (rather than being forced) affect how you view His love?
- The hymn asked, "What language shall I borrow to thank thee?" How do you express gratitude for Christ's sacrifice?
- What are practical ways we can live in response to this incredible love?

## Personal Application (15 minutes)

### Question 5: Living in Light of the Cross

*"The sermon ended with communion, connecting Christ's death to our ongoing spiritual life."*

#### Reflection Questions (give 3-4 minutes of quiet time first):

- How should the reality of Christ's death change how you live this week?
- What's one specific area of your life where you need to remember Christ's sacrifice?
- How can you "pass on" the gospel to others, as Paul did?

**Sharing:** Invite 2-3 people to share their reflections (don't pressure anyone).

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## Prayer & Action (10 minutes)

### Group Prayer Time

**Option 1 - Popcorn Prayer:** Anyone can pray short prayers of thanksgiving for Christ's sacrifice.

**Option 2 - Guided Prayer:** Leader prays, with pauses for silent reflection:

- *"Thank Jesus for His willing sacrifice..."* (pause)
- *"Confess areas where you've taken His death for granted..."* (pause)
- *"Ask for help living worthy of His sacrifice..."* (pause)
- *"Pray for opportunities to share the gospel..."* (pause)

### This Week's Challenge

Choose one:

1. **Gratitude Practice:** Each day this week, thank Jesus specifically for His death on your behalf
  2. **Gospel Sharing:** Look for one opportunity to share the gospel with someone
  3. **Cross Meditation:** Spend 10 minutes this week reading and meditating on Isaiah 53
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# Leader Notes & Tips

## Preparation:

- Read the sermon thoroughly beforehand
- Pray for each group member by name
- Have tissues available - this topic can be emotional
- Review the scriptures so you can provide context if needed

## Leading the Discussion:

- **Balance truth and grace:** Don't minimize sin, but emphasize God's love
- **Encourage vulnerability:** Share authentically yourself to model openness
- **Manage time:** Keep discussions moving, but don't rush emotional moments
- **Include everyone:** Draw out quieter members, but don't pressure anyone

## Difficult Moments:

- **If someone struggles with guilt:** Remind them of God's complete forgiveness
- **If discussion gets too theological:** Bring it back to personal application
- **If someone dominates:** Gently redirect: "Thanks, John. Let's hear from others too."

## Follow-Up:

- Check in with anyone who seemed particularly moved or struggled
- Consider planning a communion service for your group soon
- Share resources for anyone wanting to study the gospel more deeply

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## Additional Resources

### For Further Study:

- **Books:** "The Cross of Christ" by John Stott, "Pierced for Our Transgressions" by Jeffery, Ovey & Sach
- **Hymns:** "O Sacred Head Now Wounded," "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"
- **Scripture:** Romans 5:6-11, Galatians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:24