

Life Group Questions

March 24th, 2024

Soul Sift – Ray Harms-Wiebe – Mark 14:26-31, 43-50, 66-72

Note from Pastor Jonathan

Hey Life Groups,

We're in Passion/Holy Week! I want to encourage your group to have the Lord's Supper together. Since it happened within the context of a meal, it'd be wonderful to also share a meal. If that's not possible, at least eat the bread and drink the cup together, even if it's online.

The Lord's Supper happened during the Passover meal. Silas helped me find the video that Pastor Willy made about it back in 2020. His explanation starts at 23 minutes: <https://vimeo.com/406216106>. If you'd like to be thorough, feel free to go through the steps he laid out. I've included a short background at the end of the notes.

For the Bible reading, you all can read in unison or take turns.

Pastor Jonathan Hsieh

jhsieh@willingdon.org

The Lord's Supper

THE BREAD

Mark 14:22

And as they were eating, he took bread,
and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them,
and said, "Take; this is my body."

Jesus gave this Passover meal a new meaning. The bread represented His body that would be sacrificed for His disciples (1 Corinthians 11:24).

As Pastor Ray preached on Sunday, **Jesus has full awareness of our weak souls**. Before Jesus sacrificed Himself, He knew Peter would deny Him. He knew that even though they said they'd give their lives for Him, they'd abandon Him. And that was just in one night! How many times had they disobeyed God leading up to this point? And how many more times would they sin during the rest of their lives?

But Jesus still sacrificed Himself. He died *because* of their weakness.

Romans 5:6–8

⁶For while we were still **weak**, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus died for us *because* we are sinners. If we were perfect, He wouldn't need to die.

I get the chills. Jesus saw these men and knew for sure they would all fall away. But He still loved them enough to die for them.

Take turns to share some of your sins that Jesus died for.

We often don't appreciate Jesus' sacrifice because we forget how sinful we are. We put on a show, pretending to be righteous. That's like attending Alcoholics Anonymous and saying you've never struggled with alcohol. Or going to the ER and saying you're healthy. If you're good, why are you here?

We come to Jesus because we know we're dying and need a doctor, we're doomed and need a savior, and we're sinners and need forgiveness.

Lusting or having sex outside of marriage. Harboring hate. Not sharing God's gracious provisions. Shortening your time with God to spend on hobbies. Hiding your faith from classmates or co-workers. Doubting God's Word. Choosing your culture over God's ways. Prioritizing your kids' academics or sports while neglecting their spiritual lives. We all have a long list!

Last month, Pastor Vinh shared in a sermon how he had sexual partners before meeting his wife. He wasn't trying to be vulnerable or tell compelling stories. He wanted to share how much Jesus forgives. Someone sent Vinh an email, saying they had struggled with the guilt of sexual sin for decades, but after learning how Jesus forgave Vinh, she finally realized God could forgive her, too! Hallelujah!

As we share, we can encourage each other to bring our sins to Jesus. Don't feel like you must share.

Pray that God would make you aware of your sins.

As Pastor Ray said, **we all lack awareness of our weak souls.** We may have only thought of a few sins while others may have listed a lot. Either way, we've only barely seen the tip of the iceberg.

Since we were born in sin, we often miss it. Like breathing, we often don't notice it because it's automatic. The Bible says that "the heart is deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9). It's so good at fooling us into thinking our sins are normal so that we gloss over them.

I'm not asking you to pray so you'll feel bad. On the contrary, when God reveals how bad you really are, you begin to understand how gracious, patient, and kind God is.

I used to think I was a patient and self-sacrificing guy. Any lady would be **BLESSED** to marry me. After getting married, God showed me where I'm selfish and the limits of my patience. Now with a son and serving the Life Groups ministry, He's showing me how easily I get stressed and run to distractions.

When He shows me this, I'm thankful, because the alternative is I stay ignorant and keep disobeying God. Some of us may need to follow Pastor Ray's instruction: **Quit denying. Face your sin. Repent.** If you're struggling with this, you can also pray for Jesus' help. Ask Jesus to help you deal with your sin and turn away from it.

Take turns thanking Jesus for His sacrifice.

We often focus on the physical aspects of Jesus' death. He was ridiculed, beaten, and made to wear a crown of thorns. He was nailed to a cross. No doubt this was an excruciatingly painful death.

But that wasn't all Jesus did. We don't deserve crucifixion. We deserve so much worse. Everyone will die and face judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Everyone will be "held accountable to God" (Romans 3:19). Imagine being on trial before an all-knowing and all-perfect God, trying to explain and justify every sin we have committed against Him. We have no hope!

Because we can't present a valid defense, we'll be found guilty and punished with separation from God (Isaiah 59:2). He will not hear our cries for help. We will be sent to hell, described as a "lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14) and a place of "unquenchable fire" (Mark 9:43, 48).

But Jesus took all our sins onto Himself (1 Peter 2:24). He suffered what we were supposed to suffer (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus experienced the separation from the Father that we deserved (Mark 15:34). Somehow, He experienced an eternity of suffering and wrath not just for one person, but for many. I can't wrap my brain around it.

Thank Jesus for dying on the cross and taking on our eternal punishment.

Eat the bread together.

THE CUP

Mark 14:24

And he said to them, "This is my blood of the **covenant**, which is poured out for many.

In the Old Testament, God's people had a covenant relationship with God under the law. (A covenant is an agreement between two parties to relate to each other and behave in a certain way.) If the Israelites obeyed the law, God would bless them. If they disobeyed the law, God would punish them. Because everyone sinned, nobody could perfectly follow the law. They couldn't earn all of God's blessings.

Jesus fulfilled all of God's laws by perfectly following them. He earned everything we couldn't. By dying on the cross and taking on our punishment, He introduced a new covenant. In this new **covenant**, our role is to believe what Jesus did so that we can receive "promised eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15).

Share what God has gifted you with because of Jesus' sacrifice.

The Bible describes our sins as a debt we owe to God. All our attempts to pay down our debt are like a "polluted garment" (Isaiah 64:6). In Hebrew it means a used menstrual rag! Our good deeds are worthless to make up for our evil actions. In fact, it makes our debt even bigger because it's gross.

But Jesus signed our debts over to Himself and paid it with His perfect life and death. If we believe in Jesus, Jesus gives us proof of payment. When God comes to collect, we hand Him a receipt that says, "PAID BY JESUS". That is already an indescribable gift! But that's not all!

Jesus lived a perfect life, earning God's blessings and favor. When we believe in Him, He gives us His rewards that He earned with His perfect life (2 Corinthians 5:21). He gives us the right to be God's children (John 1:12). He gives us the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). He gives us eternal life (John 3:16). It's like Jesus takes all our mortgages, credit cards, student loans, and other debts to pay them off. Then He gives us His multi-bazillion dollar bank account in exchange. How awesome is that?

Joyfully share what Jesus earned for you! He gave you a church family, forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, hope for eternity, healing from brokenness, and peace when you're struggling! He gave you His love, His Word, the promise that you'll be perfect like Him someday, and the privilege of being His ambassador. He gave you the right to be God's child, the ability to approach God in prayer, eternal life, an example to follow, and the promise to be with us forever. Let's spend this time boasting and bragging about what Jesus gives us!

As we share, I hope it'll encourage others to look out for and take hold of what's available to them.

Take turns thanking Jesus for the blessings He earned for you.

Rejoice! Celebrate! Sing a song! Let Jesus know you appreciate what He's done for you. Don't take things for granted.

Mark 14:25

Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Paul tells us that whenever we eat the bread and drink the cup, we "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we're celebrating, cheering, and preaching what Jesus has done over and over until He comes back, and His kingdom is fully established.

What would you say to Jesus if He came into your Life Group and sat down with you? Of course, Jesus can hear us now, but let's practice and prepare to thank Him face-to-face when we see Him!

It's hard sometimes to tell nonbelievers about what Jesus did for us, so let's practice with each other! Life Groups and church are perfectly safe places to share and encourage. As we practice and rehearse here, it'll be easier to tell others, too!

Pray for the nonbelievers in your life.

If we truly value what Jesus did for us, we'll see how badly others need it.

Over 2/3 of people in British Columbia aren't Christian. That's Christian in the broadest sense, including cultural Christians and cults that call themselves Christian. For every three people you see at work, school, or the mall, at least two of them are still guilty of their sins. They are headed to God's courtroom with no chance of surviving. They will be found guilty and sent to hell. They don't have eternal life or the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. They don't even know that God loves them so much He sent His Son to die for them (John 3:16). They don't have God to comfort, provide wisdom, or give hope.

Let's pray for them!

You can break this prayer into three sections.

- **Pray for specific people you know.** Who are the nonbelievers in your life who need Jesus? Your neighbor, barber, cousin, daughter's friend's mother, or whoever. Let's pray that we would be like the moon, reflecting Jesus' love. Let's pray for opportunities to share the Gospel over a walk, a meal, a hockey game, or talking about struggles. Let's pray that God would convict them of their sins, so they'll see why they need Jesus. Let's pray they will know Jesus so be saved from judgment and receive God's blessings.
- **Pray for our church and city.** You've probably seen the orange Connect tables in the cafe. They answer questions and get visitors connected. Nicole has shared with me how so many people come to learn about what Willingdon Church is about. Let's pray God brings more people into our church or other churches in the area. Let's pray that we point them to the head of our church: Jesus. Let's pray we share the Gospel and that they believe in Jesus. Let's pray that these visitors will become members who also share the Gospel with visitors. Let's pray for the nonbelievers who have been coming for years but still don't believe. Let's pray our church equips our members to expand God's kingdom across the Metro Vancouver area. Let's pray for our members to generously give their time, money, and other resources so we can be witnesses in British Columbia.
- **Pray for the world.** Billions of people in the world don't know Jesus! Even in the age of the Internet, an estimated 3.4 billion people live where it's almost impossible to hear the Gospel. That's billions of people who are lost and headed to judgment! Let's pray for our Willingdon long and short-term missionaries who are going out to preach the Gospel. Let's pray God raises more people to travel around the world to tell them of His love. Let's pray that more of our church will generously give their money to support our missions. Let's pray that the people believing in Jesus will come together to form churches and grow together. Let's pray that God would give strength to those Christians struggling under persecution.

There is SO MUCH to pray about. I could go on for a few more pages. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few, so let's pray for God to send out more workers, including ourselves (Matthew 9:37-38).

Drink the cup together.

CLOSING

You can close out with a prayer or by singing a song together. Here are some suggested songs, but please feel free to sing any song your group is familiar with!

Communion – Brooke Ligertwood -- <https://youtu.be/jiXU9PpTQCs?si=AF33L0GnqTdhKLZC>

Remembrance – Hillsong -- <https://youtu.be/APEQ8lsrY0c?si=XU6M3ZW-sdM5ree5>

Behold the Lamb (Communion Hymn) – Keith and Kristyn Getty --
<https://youtu.be/0xEL0tM2U9Q?si=d4qwEAXQF4PH2SKp>

BACKGROUND

Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Passover meal the night He was betrayed.

Over 1600 years before Jesus was born, Jacob (also named Israel) and his sons moved into Egypt. Over time, they had so many children. The Egyptian kings (pharaohs) were afraid the Israelites would turn against them. They put the Israelites enslaved the Israelites and made them work hard. The pharaohs even had Israelite sons killed to slow down the population growth. It didn't work.

The Israelites called to God for help (Exodus 2:23). He heard them and sent Moses. Pharaoh refused to let God's people go, so God sent 10 plagues to demonstrate His power over the gods of the Egyptians. These plagues included turning the Nile River into blood and making the day darker than night.

For the last plague, God would kill every firstborn in the land. Exodus 12 records God's way for the Israelites to not share this terrible fate. He told them to kill a perfect lamb and put its blood on the sides and top of the doorway. They also prepared unleavened bread (bread without yeast to make it rise).

The Israelites safely ate the lamb and bread indoors while later that night God went house to house. He **passed over** the houses with blood around the door but executed judgment on the homes without.

Many Egyptians died that night. Pharaoh finally released the Israelites from slavery, and they were free.

Every year God's people celebrated the **Passover** when God passed over the Israelites.

By sacrificing a perfect lamb, God spared the firstborn of the Israelites. But Jesus came as "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). He was our Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). God sacrificed His firstborn so we wouldn't be punished.

While the Passover celebrates the Israelites being freed from Egyptian slavery, Jesus' sacrifice frees us from the slavery of sin (Romans 8:2).