



Sermon Discussion Guide

The Word of Substitution The Seven Greatest Words of Love – Part 4

Rick Warren
August 22-23, 2015

“At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock. At about three o’clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” Matthew 27:45-46 (NLT)

Jesus spoke seven of the greatest words of love from the cross, including “the Word of Substitution” in Matthew 27:45-46 above, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” What happened? Jesus became our substitute! As 2 Corinthians 5:21 below says, God poured our sins into Christ and poured God’s goodness into us! It’s “The Great Exchange”! It teaches us that God is holy, sin is ugly, and salvation is costly. Our response should be to: (1) turn from our sin and trust what Jesus did for us, (2) live in a state of gratitude, (3) remember what our sin cost Jesus when we’re tempted, and (4) pass on the Good News!

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

1. Read Matthew 27:45-46 at the top of the page. Take yourself back to the moment of Jesus’ crucifixion and imagine being right there with Jesus on the cross. Describe how the scenery changes at noon, and discuss in your group how that makes you feel. How do you feel when you suddenly hear Jesus cry out to God three hours later?

“God took the sinless Christ and poured into him our sins. Then, in exchange, he poured God’s goodness into us!” 2 Corinthians 5:21 (TLB)

2. Discuss with your group how 2 Corinthians 5:21 above explains why Jesus felt that God had forsaken him. What does it mean to you that Jesus “*is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2)? How is this related to God’s goodness being poured into us?

“The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:23 (NIV)

3. Read Romans 6:23 above aloud in your group. God hates evil; he knows what sin can do in your life, to your body, your mind, and relationships. Discuss the bad news and the good news in this verse and how it shows God’s love for you.

“God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God’s anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us.” Romans 3:25 (NLT)

4. Romans 3:25 tells us Jesus took the punishment we deserved and showed us how costly salvation is. Talk about how his gift of salvation has changed you. Share how you would talk to others about this free gift and becoming right with God.

“We are made right in God’s sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done.” Romans 3:22

5. Read the verse above and consider that “faith” in Jesus is to trust that He can take away our sins and we can be saved no matter who we are or what we have done. Prayerfully consider sins you have struggled with that you were only able to overcome because of Jesus’ willingness to sacrifice for you. If comfortable, share the challenges you experienced trying to rid yourself of the sin on your own and how it was different once you entrusted it to the Lord.

“Now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God - all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God.” Romans 5:11

6. Discuss what Romans 5:11 above says about rejoicing. Consider the act of rejoicing as a demonstration of gratitude to Christ for the relationship we have with Him through His sacrifice. Share with the group ways you can show your gratitude to Christ. Take the next step of discipleship and share other ways you could serve out of gratitude.

Diving Deeper (optional)

The Bible says, “God is patient for your sake. He doesn’t want to destroy anyone but wants all people to have an opportunity to turn to him and change the way they think and act” 2 Peter 3:9 (GW). Since Christ gave his all for us, what can we do to pass on the Good News? What should our motive be? Discuss what this verse teaches about God’s heart for all people.

REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.

Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- **Icebreaker:** What are some gifts that people commonly give to each other to express their love?
- **Goals:** Know that God is holy, sin is ugly, and salvation is costly. Receive God’s great substitution given to us in Christ and (1) turn from our sin and trust what Jesus did for us, (2) live in a state of gratitude, (3) when tempted, remember what our sin cost Jesus, and (4) pass on the Good News to others!
- **Final Prayer:** Heavenly Father, when Jesus became our substitute on the cross he cried out, *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* Help me to accept the sacrifice of Jesus to save me, turn from my sin, live in a state of gratitude, remember what my sin cost Jesus when I’m tempted, and pass on the Good News of your love to others!

Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God’s wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God’s instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God’s five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn’t. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We’ve designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.