



# Sermon Discussion Guide

## The Answer Is Easter

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*"God called you to endure suffering because Christ suffered for you. He left you an example so that you could follow in his footsteps." 1 Peter 2:21 (GW)*

Jesus' resurrection validated all the claims he made and proved there is life after death. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus gave us a model of how to get through the toughest days in our lives. Like Jesus, we will often go through days of pain and suffering, followed by days of grief, agony, and doubt. Easter is the answer to the question of how we can get through those days of pain and confusion to days of joy, celebration, and victory like Jesus did with his resurrection. Here we'll discuss the steps we need to take to get through those kinds of days in our lives based on the model Jesus gave us.

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

*"Jesus took his disciples with him to Gethsemane and said 'Stay here with me while I pray.' Then he took Peter, James, and John a little further. He was filled with anguish and deep distress, and he said to them, 'My heart is so overwhelmed and crushed with sorrow that I feel like I'm dying. Just sit here and watch with me.'" Matthew 26:36-38*

1. Read Matthew 26:36-38. How can friends bring comfort and strength without having to talk much or even give advice?
2. Describe any friends you have who are like that: with whom you can honestly share your deepest emotions, and who will stay with you when you are distressed. How do you feel about trying to be that kind of friend to someone?

*"For all the promises of God find their 'Yes' in Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 1:20 (ESV)*

3. In days of confusion, if you remember God's promises you have nothing to worry about. What kinds of promises do you remember that made you feel at ease while going through miserable times?

*"To all who mourn in Zion I will give beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning, and praise instead of despair." Isaiah 61:3 (LB)*

4. How did remembering this kind of promise from God while going through extreme difficulties in your life help you lay your burden down? If you have any experience, share it with your group.

*"I pray that you will begin to understand how incredibly great his power is to help those who believe him. It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead." Ephesians 1:19-20 (LB)*

5. In the verse above, where does the power come from and who can receive it? What can that power be used for?
6. In John 11:25, Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life," so we must rely on him personally in order to get through pain to days of joy. What specific actions must we take in order to rely on the person of Jesus rather than relying on some philosophical or spiritual principle?

### Diving Deeper (optional)

1. Jesus modeled three steps for praying to God when in pain: (1) affirm God's power; (2) complain about the pain; (3) offer your trust: "I want your will, not mine, to be done." The first two steps are relatively easy, but step three is very difficult. Nevertheless, what kinds of benefits do you think you could get by following step three?
2. In Isaiah 43:2, God promised "*When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you.*" Describe how you felt in any situation where you got through big troubles and you think God kept this promise.

**REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.**

## Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

### Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- What do children typically do when they are hurt? What do adults tend to do when they are in emotional pain?
- Encourage group members to reach out to friends and to reach out to God in their days of pain.
- Motivate members to remember the promises of God in their days of confusion.
- Challenge members to rely on the power of Jesus to get to days of joy.
- Pray: Father God, in our days of pain and distress, help us reach out to others and to you, so we can be strengthened and comforted. Holy Spirit, in our days of confusion, remind us of God’s promises in his Word, especially when we start to worry. Let God’s Word take root in our hearts and minds. Jesus, as you transform us through our trials and resurrect every broken area of our lives, help us to rely on your power as we await days of joy.

### 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.