



Sermon Discussion Guide

THE WORD OF ASSURANCE

The Seven Greatest Words of Love-Part 2

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One of the criminals hanging beside Jesus hurled insults at him. "So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!" But the other criminal rebuked him, "Don't you fear God even when you are dying? We deserve to die for our evil deeds, but this man has not done anything wrong!" Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Luke 23:39-43 (NLT)

A person's last words on Earth are often of great importance. In Jesus' case, his last words to us have eternal significance. Of the two thieves on the cross next to Jesus, one turned away from him and one turned toward him and asked what he must do to be saved. The words Jesus gave him embodied five truths: 1) I must know I'll face God after I die; 2) I must know I've sinned against God; 3) I must know Jesus was more than a man; 4) I must know only God's grace can save me; and 5) I must know Jesus will save me if I ask. Let's look at a few of these truths in more depth.

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

"Don't you fear God even when you are dying?" Luke 23:40 (NIV)

1. To us, death is the end of what we know. To God it is the beginning of our eternal lives with him. What does death mean to you? How about eternity?
2. In Luke's record above, he describes one criminal rebuking the other by declaring boldly, "We deserve to die for our evil deeds." When we think of "evil deeds," we often think of what we read in the headlines. But what are some of the little things we do each day that might qualify?

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

3. In Romans 6:23, Paul contrasts the cost of sin with the gift of God in Christ Jesus. What is the difference between wages and a gift?

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." Acts 16:31 (NIV)

4. How does Acts 16:31 assure us of God's love? If it's really that simple, why don't more people believe it?

"Jesus replied, 'I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.'" Luke 23:43 (NIV)

5. Luke 23:43 assures us that salvation is immediate, certain, provides a relationship with Jesus, and is a place forever. How can this promise change your approach to life?
6. With your eternal salvation settled, what is your next step to deepen the trust and dependence you have in Jesus as your savior?

Diving Deeper (optional)

"This is the hour to receive God's favor! Today is the day to be saved!" 2 Corinthians 6:2 (TEV)

1. Jesus not only told the thief what he must know and what he must do to be saved, he told him when and where to do it, as we see in Luke 23:43. How does 2 Corinthians 6:2 expand on what Jesus said?
2. If you have not yet made the choice to receive Christ, don't wait any longer. It is as simple as Romans 10:13: "Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Why do you think so many of us put off making this decision about a future that is inevitable?



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REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.



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Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- Share a story of a personal rescue—from a broken down car to a broken bone.
- To be saved we must know we will face God after we die, we have sinned against God, Jesus is more than a man, only God’s grace can save us, and Jesus will save us if we ask.
- “Dear Jesus, remember us...”

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.