



SESSION 3

CHRIST CAME TO DIE

Jesus came to suffer and to sacrifice—
and to call us to do the same.



WORSHIP

READING PLAN

Continue exploring the Book of Acts throughout this week. Use the space provided to record your thoughts and responses as you read.

Day 1

Acts 9:1-19

Day 2

Acts 9:20-43

Day 3

Acts 10:1-16

Day 4

Acts 10:17-48

Day 5

Acts 11:1-18

Day 6

Acts 11:19-30

Day 7

Acts 12:1-25



JESUS CALLS US TO SUFFER

It's important to understand that disciples of Jesus haven't cornered the market on suffering. All people suffer. And yet it is true that Christians should differ from the rest of the world in terms of their response to suffering. While many people suffer hopelessly, desperately, or bitterly, Christians suffer purposefully.

Specifically, we suffer for the spread of the gospel and for the advancement of good.

How have your responses to suffering changed throughout the different phases of your life?

The apostle Paul is perhaps the greatest example we have in the Bible of suffering for the spread of the gospel. Paul's writings proclaim to believers of all ages that not only have we been given the glorious gift of belief in Christ, but we've also been endowed with the privilege of suffering for Him (see Phil. 1:29). While we never suffer to redeem the world—that's already been accomplished by Christ—we do suffer as part of our efforts to reach the world with the gospel message.

Read the following passages of Scripture and record what they teach about suffering for the spread of the gospel.

Philippians 3:7-9

Colossians 1:24-26

2 Timothy 1:8-12

Paul was willing to go anywhere and to suffer any persecution for the privilege of sharing God's message about Christ. For this Paul was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, imprisoned, sleep deprived, hungry, thirsty, cold, and without adequate clothing (see 2 Cor. 11:24-28). Eventually, he was martyred.

2-18. How would you summarize Paul's conclusions regarding suffering?

Philippians, he was a prisoner in Rome. He'd been labeled as a criminal, and cause others to feel ashamed of him or withdraw from him—or worse, rejection in the church.

Paul wanted the Philippians to have the proper perspective on the trouble he was experiencing. He wasn't alarmed or discouraged about it. He wanted them to know not only that the circumstance of his incarceration, but *how* God was at work. He wanted them to see his sufferings—the dangerous and stressful and heartbreaking and painful things in our lives—to spread the gospel to those who don't know Him and to help them become more emboldened to speak up about Him.

Suffering can be a means to bring about good in your life and in the lives of others. It's not about it, but it's true. Whatever God allows to come upon you, He also allows it to be in drawing others to Himself and His purposes. The circumstances in your life, whether you're bothered by them, or frustrated by them, or you may actually be magnifying His presence to those surrounding you. Knowing that doesn't make those circumstances any less painful, but you endure suffering with purpose and resolve.

How can personal suffering result in something good?

29-30. What principles does Paul offer in these verses regarding suffering with purpose?

Even with our best of our abilities, we will experience suffering. Yet, we need not be discouraged by the thought of that suffering. Through God's power, we can endure it. Better to have the knowledge that our suffering may be used by God to spread the gospel and to advance the cause of good in this world.



JESUS CALLS US TO SACRIFICE

There's no way to avoid the truth: Living as disciples of Jesus will require us to make sacrifices. And let's be clear, we're not talking about vague or general sacrifices, such as giving up the pleasure of immorality or releasing the opportunity to be filthy rich. Instead, the sacrifices we make to follow Jesus will be both real and concrete.

Read the following passages of Scripture and record what they teach about making sacrifices in order to follow Christ.

Matthew 10:37-39

Matthew 16:24-27

Luke 9:57-62

Luke 14:31-33

Let's dig deeper into the specific types of sacrifices required to follow Jesus.

First, followers of Jesus must sacrifice possessions. While God does not forbid us from having things, He does want to be sure that *things* don't have *us*. To ensure that God has first place in our hearts, we must untie our affections from the things we own. We must be able to part with material possessions and wealth whenever God leads us to do so.

What are some of your most prized possessions?

Just sacrifice relationships. God will have no rivals for our affections. Between honoring God and honoring our loved ones, we must be ready to sacrifice. Those who would stand in the way of God's interests in our lives or try to usurp His authority are to be denied the authority to dictate our direction. God is our most important relationship. He is our most important person.

How do you anticipate that one of your personal relationships will be sacrificed over your relationship with God?

Jesus must sacrifice their plans. There will be times when following God's plan for our lives is in favor of God's plans. He reserves the right to change any of our plans, family plans, vacation plans, education plans, retirement plans, financial plans, etc. Followers of Christ humbly allow God to order their steps, giving Him the right to change our plans (Isa. 46:10-13). We submit our intentions to Him each day, surrender our plans, and submit our ambitions and future goals to Him.

How do you personally submit your short-term and long-term plans to God?

Jesus must sacrifice their positions. Surrendering position means being willing to give up whatever rank we think we've achieved or rise from whatever rest we think we deserve to follow God's present agenda. It involves relinquishing any honor or role we have, and being willing to be honored above us (see John 3:30). It involves refusing to use our position, Christ or our social status for personal advantage, but only for the public good (see Luke 22:27).

How do you take to prepare yourself for any change of position, and what God may require of you?