

The Power of the Cross

Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much interest do you have in jewelry, watches, or other accessories?
2. How would you rate your ability to tolerate physical pain?

Read the following passages: Romans 3:21-26; 6:1-14; 8:1-4.

The central symbol of the Christian faith is the cross. Because of our cultural distance from the first century, it is difficult for many of us to understand how shameful crucifixion was. The goal of crucifixion went way beyond death. The goal of crucifixion was the complete degradation and abasement of the individual. No Jewish person was expecting a crucified Messiah. The idea would have been abhorrent and absurd. Even so, the apostle Paul wrote, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul recognized that "the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Crucifixion was intended to strip the individual of every shred of dignity and respectability. It communicated utter rejection and unworthiness. Can you think of times in your life in which you have feared being scorned and rejected? Explain. Are you aware of things in your life now that you try to keep hidden from others? What are some ways that shame affects us practically?
2. Why did Jesus expose himself to the humiliation of crucifixion? How does his crucifixion help us address areas of shame in our own lives?
3. How do justice and forgiveness come together on the cross? How can the cross help us when we've been deeply wronged by another person?
4. Generally speaking, are you more prone to ignore or to address areas of your life in which you have been hurt or offended? Explain.
5. Anger, at the emotional level, is not inherently good or bad. It is an emotional response indicating that we feel something is wrong. When does anger become unhelpful? Generally speaking, do you feel anger is playing an appropriate role in your life? Do you think that any expression of anger is wrong and should always be avoided? Explain.

6. What are the main points that Paul is making in Romans 6:1-14? How does our sense of identity impact the behaviors we engage in? How is Romans 6:11 relevant in this regard?
7. Read Galatians 2:20. How did the crucifixion impact Paul's own life? What are some ways you would like to see the cross positively impact your own life?

Pray