

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

The Passion of the Christ

Questions written by Mark Collins

March 23, 2008



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Small Group Announcement - The Small group team is so excited to see and experience all the supernatural growth over the last three months. In fact, God has blessed us with one hundred new groups since the beginning of the 2008. Despite His goodness the demand for new small groups at the Rock is staggering. Last month we had over 1000 people who signed up wanting to be placed in a group in their area. One simple thing that you could do to help the team is to allow us to post your phone number on the group finder on the Rock's website. This will help people connect to you much easier and help them find a group more quickly.

Maybe it's been a while since you have updated your information with us. We understand that things change like phone numbers, locations where you're meeting, or new leaders in your group. Right now would be a perfect time to update your info, and let us know how everything is going. We'd love to serve you any way we can. To update your information call Danah at 619-764-5120 or email her at danah.davis@therocksandiego.org

MINISTRY PRAYER REQUESTS

As "small groupies," you are the heart and soul of this ministry--who better than you to lift up the Small Group Ministry in prayer? So, it's up to you, you can spend time in your small group praying for these things (weekly or occasionally), or you can pray during the week on your own time. If you'd like to be added to our Pastor's Prayer Team, just let us know. Mark Collins, the Small Group Pastor, would love your prayers! We send out a monthly email of his personal and ministry prayer requests. Just contact Andy Rodgers at andy.rodgers@therocksandiego.org. May God work through your prayers mightily!

Reaching the Lost: Pray that all the small groups continue to develop relationships with those who are far from God, and invite them to their small groups.

Current Small Group Leaders/Small Groups: Pray that all of our Small Groups take time to follow up on all the new people trying to get into small groups.

Potential Small Group Leaders: Pray that our current leaders continue to give their ministry away and develop future leaders to reach their full potential in Jesus.

Small Group Staff: Pray that God gives us the favor and wisdom to rebuild the Small Group team. Ask Him to order our steps in every decision we make.

The Rock Body: Pray that the Rock Army grows deeper and deeper in accountability to one another.

MEMORY VERSE

“For the joy that was set before him, (he) endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

Roughly, six hundred years before Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God, Isaiah the prophet wrote about what kind of life that the Son of God would have:

Despised and rejected by men;
a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief...
we esteemed him stricken by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was chastisement that brought peace,
and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned everyone to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was opposed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent
so he opened not his mouth....

He was cut off of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgressions of my people....
There was no deceit in his mouth.
Yet it was for the will of the Lord to crush him;
He has put him to grief.

One of the most important questions of the twenty first century is: “Why did Jesus Christ suffer so much, then die?” But we will never understand the importance of Christ’s death if we fail to go beyond the human cause (he suffered and died at the hands of sinful men). The ultimate answer to this question to who crucified Jesus is: God did. It’s a staggering thought. Jesus was his only Son, yet he bruised him with unrelenting cruelty. Man wanted Jesus out of the way for many reasons: only God could devise such a scheme to work even Christ’s suffering and death for our good. One of the aims of this small group lesson is just to let the Bible speak of why Christ’s passion was the only way to reconcile humanity with God. Secondly, this study is to serve as a reminder that because of such a great demonstration of love, that this act demands a response. Anytime a gift is given the recipient must choose to respond in one of two ways. The first way says, *the gift is too valuable, I’m not worthy of it.* The second way says, *the gift is too valuable not to receive it.* It is my hope after studying the magnitude of Jesus’ passion that the latter will be your response. Also, I pray if you have accepted His gift that once again you’ll stand amazed at the mystery of the cross. For, if He did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things (Rom. 8:32)?

Getting Started

Start your group tonight, by coming up with as many reasons why Jesus had to suffer and die for our sins (e.g. that we might belong to Him, to become a sympathetic high priest, and to gain His joy to name just few). Share with the group which reasons are especially touching to you.

Digging Deeper:

Jesus did not wrestle His angry father to the floor of heaven, forcing Him to be merciful to sinners. Rather, conceived before creation, the Trinity planned this breathtaking strategy (the gospel) to reveal their love to humans who had purposely rejected them. What's so amazing about the substitution of Christ for sinners is that it was the Godhead's idea. Therefore, Jesus didn't intrude on God's plan to punish sinners, instead Jesus was to be the object of God's wrath from the beginning.

1. Read Galatians 3:13; Romans 3:25; 1 John 4:10. How do these verses reveal that Jesus suffered to absorb the wrath of God?
 - a. Is God right to have anger towards sin? Why?
 - b. How does God's love restrain His anger?
2. Read Colossians 2:13. How did Jesus death and resurrection cancel the legal demands of the law against us?
 - a. Why is it folly to think that one day our good deeds will outweigh our bad deeds (see Romans 3:19)?
 - b. If the law cannot save us what was it meant to do?
3. Read Mark 10:45. Who do you think that Christ paid humanity's ransom, to God or Satan (for help read Hebrews 2:14; Ephesians 5:2)? Why is that an important distinction?
 - a. Why do you think the price was so high?
4. Read Hebrews 9:9-14. How important is a clean conscience? How does Christ's sacrifice surpass the Old Testament sacrifices?
 - a. What are some ways you've attempted to salve your conscience?
 - b. How has Christ sacrifice ended the OT priesthood (read Hebrews 10:11-12)?
5. Read Ephesians 2:14-16. How has the cross destroyed the hostility between the races?
6. Read Colossians 2:14-15 and 1 John 3:8. How has Christ's sacrifice disarmed the rulers and authorities?
 - a. Who are these "rulers and authorities" (Rev. 2:10)?
 - b. How can personally fight these "rulers" in your life
6. Read Galatians 5:11 and 6:12. How has Jesus' suffering abolished all rituals that attempt to lead to salvation? What rituals are keeping you from God in your life right now?

Bringing it Home

There's no denying it, the path that leads to true joy is a hard road. It's hard for us, and it was hard for Jesus. That's why Christ warned us in the world you'll have much tribulation (John 16:33). He also told us that "A disciple is not above his teacher." In his final hour Jesus prayed: "Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had before the world existed." Frankly, God said that Jesus was glorified because of his suffering. Ultimately, the Father used the cross to show that the worst evil imaginable can be turned around by God.

God can do all things, for he took the greatest evil of all mankind (Jesus suffering at the hands of sinners), and used it as the means to save all humans from their sins. He defeated suffering by suffering. He defeated death by dying and eventually living.

Are there some paradoxes in your life? Spend sometime asking God to use his resurrection power to renew his life.