

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

LENT 2021
LEADER GUIDE

WEEK 6: UNFORGIVEN

03.28.2021

SESSION GOALS

This session's discussions and prayer will equip participants to:

- Reflect on experiences of being forsaken and abandoned,
- Compare and contrast the beginning and the end of Jesus' public ministry according to Mark.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 15:25-39

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Jesus's last moments leading up to his death are excruciatingly painful to read, especially when Jesus cries out, "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" These words display the utmost sense of despair, disappointment, hopelessness, and abandonment that one can experience. Jesus's public ministry seems to end in such a contrast to the beginning of his ministry. His ministry started with the words of affirmation from heaven saying, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11) Yet, his ministry ends with an exasperated plea, "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" While his ministry starts with a beautiful union of the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove, his ministry seems to end with such a painful separation as Jesus descends to death.

But with Jesus's death, the curtain in the temple was torn open, as heaven was torn open with Jesus's baptism. Now, not only is it God who acknowledges Jesus as the Son of God, but even a Roman soldier acknowledges that "Surely, this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39) Jesus's life, death, and resurrection brought

heaven to earth, and God's love for us is made even clearer. Jesus's experience of feeling forsaken helps us to reflect on our own human experiences of feeling forsaken by God at times. By witnessing Jesus's experience of feeling abandoned by God and betrayed by his friends, we see God's mighty grace that resurrects union out of separation. Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection is a powerful demonstration of God's unceasing love for us, despite all of the good, the bad, and the ugly.

SUGGESTED LEADER PREPARATION

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your preparation, and your class as you present this guide to your participants.
2. Carefully read the scripture and take note of what stands out to you.
3. With the insight you have gained during the scripture reading, go through the leader guide to add/modify/eliminate any discussion questions or activities according to the needs of the participants.

LESSON PLAN¹

ENGAGE

ASK: Have you ever been to a place that might be considered God-forsaken? The word usually is used to express something or somewhere that is miserable, or depressing. But what would a place be like that was literally forsaken by God? What was it like? What made the place seem godforsaken?

¹ Many of this week's content are inspired by and taken from Chapter 3 "My God, My God" in *Seven Words* written by Susan Robb.

EXPLORE

ASK: Was there ever a time in your life when you felt forsaken by God? Have you ever felt angry with God? Were you able to express those feelings to God?

COMMUNE WITH THE WORD

ACTIVITY: Mark 15:25-39 captures the last moments of Jesus's public ministry before he was put to death. This scene is vastly different from the beginning moments of his ministry in Mark 1:9-11. For example, in the beginning of Jesus's ministry, heaven was torn apart and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove, whereas the curtain in the temple was torn apart in the last moments of Jesus's ministry. What are the other significant differences between these two scenes?

(Leaders, please refer to the background section of this document if you would like some hints!)

ASK: There are many moments in our lives when we have started with many affirmations and great hopes for the future, yet we find ourselves feeling abandoned and forsaken at the end of it. Disappointments set in, and we start to question if God is truly present, loving, and just with us. What do you do when you find yourself in these places? How did Jesus respond when he found himself in such a place?

EMPOWER

(OPTIONAL) ASK: Where in your life, or in our community, or in our society do you feel abandoned and forsaken by God? How can we faithfully respond?

ASK: In this coming week, how will you show God's presence to someone who feels isolated and "godforsaken"?

CHURCH-WIDE MISSION: SHARING SHOES & JOY IN PERU

"I was standing in line, waiting my turn to give a Christmas gift to a child at the orphanage. One of our mission team members described how she had just

watched a 12-year-old boy open his gift. Inside, he was thrilled to find a new t-shirt. "He said it was the first time in his life he owned a new shirt." Whether it's a new t-shirt, new socks, or a new pair of shoes, the real gift is what it communicates. It tells a child you're unique, you're special, you're worthy, and you're loved."

- Lanie Williams, Mission Coordinator



* Children in the Andean village Llullucha savor gifts of hot chocolate and panetone.

Join us in serving families in Peru by donating new shoes and socks, volunteering to sort and prepare shoes for delivery, or donate to help build more bathrooms.

LAUNCH

You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out
and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.
You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.
Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths,
you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

Psalms 132:1-12 (NIV)