

EASTER

J. D. GREEAR

EASTER

SESSION 1: BETRAYED BY ME

OPEN

What is the most unexpected gift you have ever received? What was your response when you opened it?

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When Jesus calls us to follow him, we often have expectations of what our life with Jesus will look like. We may expect him to give us comfort, prosperity, and a life of ease. But what if he asks us to follow him into difficulty? That may not be what we expected and can lead us to a point where we ask ourselves, “Is it really worth following Jesus?” In today’s session, we will look at a person who realized he was unwilling to follow Jesus down unexpected paths.

**Watch Session 1: Betrayed by Me
(14 Minutes)**

DISCUSSION

In this session, we’ll take a deeper look at Jesus’s betrayal. Read Matthew 26:17–25, 47–50 out loud as a family to familiarize yourself with the story.

Judas was once a friend of Jesus. But after some time, Judas decided he would rather not do what Jesus asked him to do. Judas betrayed Jesus. When we sin, we also betray Jesus. Instead of following him, we turn our backs and walk our own way. **In what ways does your sin make you like Judas?**

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When we are in trouble, often our first reaction is to hide. The last person we want to see is the person who will punish us, so we try to go as far away from that person as possible. **What is your reaction when you get in trouble?**

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J.D. pointed out that we sometimes only want Jesus in parts of our lives. We will follow him while we are at church or with our Christian friends, but maybe not while we are at work or school. **When is it difficult for you to follow Jesus?**

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There may be some things in our lives that keep us from following Jesus. They may even be difficult to give up. But Jesus is always better than the things that keep us from him. What things in your life might you need to give up so that you can follow Jesus more closely?

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After Judas betrayed Jesus, Jesus called him “friend” in verse 50. Jesus was ready and willing to forgive Judas and to be his friend once again. In the same way, Jesus offers us forgiveness after we sin. Even when we betray him, he still loves us. **What sins do you need to ask Jesus to forgive?**

LAST WORD

We are far more like Judas than we could have imagined. At the same time, we are far more loved by Jesus than we could ever dream. Despite our sin, betrayal, misunderstandings, and false expectations, Jesus loves us and offers us forgiveness.

Though we are sinners, we do not have to remain separated from God. Will you run to Jesus for forgiveness?

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Typically, we run and hide when we are in trouble. Sometimes, the last people we want to see are our parents and teachers—people who might punish us for what we have done. But God wants us to run to him for forgiveness, grace, and mercy, whenever we need it. Play a round of hide-and-seek as a family. Start with the parents hiding from the kids. After everyone has had a chance both to hide and to seek, remind each other that you don’t have to hide from Jesus when you sin. Take a moment to pray as a family and thank Jesus for his forgiveness for all of our sins.

SESSION 2: FORSAKEN FOR ME

OPEN

What helps you feel comfortable around your closest friends? What about your relationship with them lets you know that they are there for you?

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There are some friends we know will always be there for us. No matter what happens, all we need to do is reach out and they will come to help us. We have a friend like that in Jesus. But there are times in our lives where he may feel distant from us. What do we do when it feels like he isn't listening to our prayers?

In today's session, we will see that Jesus was forsaken so that we could be brought near to God. Because of what Jesus endured for us, we will never be far away from God.

**Watch Session 2: Forsaken for Me
(12 Minutes)**

DISCUSSION

J.D. referenced Matthew 26:36–44 in the video. Read this passage out loud as a family to familiarize yourself with the story of Jesus's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Our sins separate us from God. But, because of Jesus, we can know God and be sure that he hears us when we pray. Jesus was separated from God for us—he took the punishment that we deserved so that we could be forgiven. When we see Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, we see our savior standing in our place.

In the video, J.D. told us why Jesus was being forsaken for us. **What does it mean to be forsaken? Why did Jesus go to the cross?**

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When Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, he felt scared and alone. **What do you do when you feel scared and alone?**

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Sometimes, when we feel scared or alone we behave in ways that we should not. Read Matthew 26:47–54. Jesus's disciple became afraid when Jesus was being arrested and began to hurt the people around him. He forgot Jesus was in control, even in a situation that made him afraid and worried. **When you feel afraid, what could you do to remind yourself that Jesus is in control?**

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Even when we feel scared and alone, we can be sure that God is with us. Jesus will never forsake us. **What would it look like for you to trust in Jesus when you are having trouble or are scared?**

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LAST WORD

Jesus was forsaken so that we could be accepted by God. Jesus took our place so that we would never have to feel the punishment for our sin. That is good news! It is a free gift, but a gift that we must choose to accept.

If you know Jesus, if you have accepted him as your savior, you can rest in the assurance that no matter where you go, no matter what happens, no matter how dark life gets, God will never forsake you. In short, there will always be hope.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

The family activity this week is to color a picture of Jesus together. You can find and download the picture at the end of this study. As you and your family color, talk about the answers you gave to the questions in this study. Find ways that you can specifically encourage one another to trust in Jesus when you are afraid or feel alone.

SESSION 3: ACCUSED FOR ME

OPEN

What is the craziest thing you have ever done to help a friend? Is there anything you would not do for them?

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We do a lot of things to help our friends. We often don't mind being inconvenienced, especially if it helps them. That's what friends are for! But would you ever go to jail for them? What if they committed a crime—would you go to jail in their place?

Jesus knew we were guilty of sin, and still he stepped into our place and took the penalty for our sin.

Watch Session 3: Accused for Me
(12 Minutes)

DISCUSSION

In this session, we'll take a deeper look at Jesus's trial. Read Matthew 27:11–31.

To say Jesus's trial was unfair is an understatement. In the video, J.D. pointed out six ways the trial was not only unjust, but illegal. Even so, Jesus, who knew the Law inside and out, never spoke out against the injustice being done to him.

What is your reaction when someone at school or your sibling accuses you of breaking the rules?

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Jesus was accused for us, taking our place and our punishment for the sins we committed. J.D. taught us that we are like Barabbas, who was a thief, a murderer, and a threat to society. **Do you think you are like Barabbas? Why or why not?**

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While you may have never stolen anything or committed any crimes, we have all sinned. That makes us guilty. **In what ways do you think you are or are not guilty of sin?**

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Jesus was accused of our sin so that we could walk free, like Barabbas. God loves us so deeply that he sent Jesus to rescue us. Read Romans 5:6–8. **In what ways has God demonstrated his love for you?**

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Because we have a great friend in Jesus, we can be forgiven of our sin and called sons and daughters of God. **What could it look like for you to live as a son or daughter of God?**

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God is not distant. He is not angry. He is not waiting for you to get your act together. God loves you more than you can imagine and wants you to be with him. When we trust in Jesus, God runs to us and all of heaven throws a party because you, his son or daughter, have come home.

LAST WORD

Jesus was not just accused for us; he was accused instead of us. He, the innocent, stepped into our place and took our guilt. It was unjust. It was unfair. It was scandalous. But he did it all for us. Jesus willingly stepped into our place so that we, the sinners, could be spared of guilt and God's punishment.

More than that, God is not ashamed of us. He loved us so much that he willingly took our condemnation so that we could spend eternity with him. What a good friend we have in Jesus.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

This activity will help remind you and your family of Jesus's love for you. Write the phrase "Jesus forgives me" on a chalkboard or a sticky note and place it in a prominent place in your home. When you are getting ready in the morning, coming home after school, or running errands, read the note out loud to remind yourself and one another of God's love for you.

This session includes a detailed description of the crucifixion that may be too graphic for young children. Consider watching the video in advance and judging whether or not it's a good fit for your family. The family guide can still be used without the video, if needed.

SESSION 4: PUNISHED FOR ME

OPEN

Have you ever had an experience of mistaken identity—thinking a stranger was a friend, assuming someone was waving at you when they were waving at the person behind you? What was that experience like?

We have all had that awkward moment where we mistake someone's identity, confusing them for someone else. It is uncomfortable to say the least but something we can move past. You may even be able to laugh about that situation today.

But what if mistaking someone's identity was more serious? What if God came to you, and you wrote him off as "just some guy"? That may sound extreme, but we do it to Jesus all the time. Today, as we examine Jesus's crucifixion, try to answer this question: who do you think Jesus is?

**Watch Session 4: Punished for Me
(12 Minutes)**

DISCUSSION

The crucifixion can be difficult to think about. We recoil from the violence of the whole event. Today, instead of focusing on the specifics of his execution, let's look at the ways people at Jesus's crucifixion reacted to him. Read Matthew 27:27–37.

What is your reaction to the crucifixion?

J.D. pointed out three specific groups of people around Jesus's crucifixion. The first group is called the angry—those who respond to Jesus like the two criminals who hung on crosses next to Jesus. **What makes you upset with God?**

In his crucifixion, we see that Jesus cares deeply for us and our pain. He willingly endured the cross so that he might rescue us from a similar fate. J.D. said, "If God saved me from my greatest condemnation, he won't abandon me in my struggles." **What could it look like for you to trust him in your pain?**

Read Matthew 27:38–44.

The second group J.D. noted was made up of those who misunderstood Jesus, the religious leaders who mocked him and his mission. While you may not mock Jesus or laugh at those who follow him, if you think Jesus was just a good man or teacher or spiritual guide and not the savior and Son of God, you have misunderstood him and his mission. **Who do you think Jesus was? What do you think was his purpose?**

The last group are the outsiders, like the Roman centurion, who saw Jesus for who he was. Read Matthew 27:45–54.

Jesus died for people far from God so that they could be saved. Jesus did not wait for the centurion to clean up his life before dying for him. **And if God was willing to save one of the men who mocked, tortured, and crucified him, how could he not do the same for you? What would it look like for you to come to Jesus as you are today?**

LAST WORD

Jesus went to the cross after an unjust trial for you. He endured wounds, taunting, and suffering in your place so that you would not have to experience God's wrath for sin. If you think God is not paying attention to you, look at Jesus who loved you so deeply that he stepped into your place and took your punishment.

Jesus completed his work, tearing the veil of sin that divided you from God. In him, God is reaching out to you, but if you only think Jesus was a "good man" you will miss the gift he is offering you today.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

By practicing gratitude, we remind ourselves of every way God has helped us in the past. That way, when we come to times of difficulty, we will not be tempted to think God has forgotten us. Instead, we will remind ourselves of Jesus and his greater purpose for our lives. Take some time to practice gratitude as a family. During a family meal or a car ride, have everyone in the family list three things they are thankful for that day. Thank God for those things and for the ways Jesus has loved your family.

EASTER

SESSION 5: ALIVE IN ME

OPEN

What do you love most about Easter? What family traditions or events do you look forward to most?

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Easter is full of celebration and joy. We find it in a basket full of gifts, the abundant new life of spring, or gathering with families at church on Easter Sunday. In all of these activities, we see the story and hope of Jesus. He has offered us gift upon gift in what he did for us. When we trust in him, we find an abundance of new life and hope. And, in all we do, we are called to worship and celebrate him.

At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus's coming and look forward to his return. During Easter, we celebrate everything Jesus has done for us and look forward to the ways we can serve him here on earth.

**Watch Session 5: Alive in Me
(12 Minutes)**

DISCUSSION

After his crucifixion, Jesus's followers were afraid, and maybe even thought that the things Jesus said were not true. But Jesus's death was not the end of the story. In this session, we'll take a deeper look at Jesus's resurrection, the reason we celebrate Easter. Read Matthew 28:1–10.

When Jesus was resurrected, the soldiers guarding his tomb became afraid, but the women were astonished and amazed. His resurrection proved that Jesus was who he had claimed to be: the Son of God, our savior. **After watching the video with J.D., what do you think it means for Jesus to be "alive" in you?**

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When the women at the tomb met Jesus, they fell down and worshipped him. **If you trust Jesus as your Lord and savior, what does it look like for you to worship Jesus both in and out of church?**

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Even if you have put your faith in Jesus, you may still have some questions or doubts. That is okay! **What questions do you have about church or being a Christian? To whom could you talk to find answers for your questions?**

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Because Jesus is alive in us, we are called to live like Jesus in our schools, neighborhoods, teams, and at home. Read the great commission in Matthew 28:18–20. **What does Jesus command us to do as Christians?**

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What would it look like for you to tell others about Jesus and what he has done for you?

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At the end of the Great Commission, Jesus gives us a comforting reminder: he will be with us always. Jesus is alive in you. No matter where you go, no matter what he asks you to do, Jesus will never leave your side. **In what ways can you remind yourself this week that God is with you throughout each day?**

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LAST WORD

Jesus's work did not end two thousand years ago. He took our place in his life, death, and resurrection and is alive in his church—his people today. He was betrayed, forsaken, accused, and punished in our place so that we could be forgiven and spend eternity with him.

So, how are you going to respond to that good news? God is offering us an incredible gift, but whether or not you accept that gift is up to you.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Lots of families have Easter egg hunts on Easter Sunday. This year add a prize egg to the hunt for each of your kids. Think of a prize that will get your kids excited—for example, getting their favorite ice cream flavor for dessert.



HE IS RISEN