

Holy Week

BIBLE READING & REFLECTIONS 2020



HEBRON BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Introduction

This reflection guidebook takes us through the narratives from Gethsemane to Golgotha as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. A reflection is not just thinking about the chosen Scripture passage; it is in fact listening. Let the word of God speak to you and captivate your cognitive and emotional attention. Therefore, before you begin each day's reflection, ask the Holy Spirit to take you into the scene as you pay attention to the descriptions, follow the actions and listen to the dialogues. It is important to read slowly and attentively.

Each narrative offers a lot of material for reflection and meditation, but we will reflect on just one or two points. The questions and suggestions at the end of each day's narrative are meant to guide you in your reflection. There is no need, however, to restrict yourself to them but follow the Holy Spirit as your supreme guide. You may also find that yourself spending more than a day reflecting on one narrative. This is all right because this is not a homework assignment that you must complete one per day. Feel free to dwell with Jesus. May you see Jesus, your relationship with him, the condition of your soul, and thus the direction for spiritual growth.

It helps to share your responses with a trusted Christian friend or group so that you do not become too self-absorbed. There are no right or wrong responses, only be honest with God and with yourself. When your friend shares responses with you, listen attentively. You are a friend, not a teacher, so do not teach. You may re-state points in your friend's sharing that seemed significant or which you appreciate, and then pray together. You may also follow up on the challenge which your friend has committed to undertake. Let's participate in transforming discipleship.

Day 1

SCRIPTURE

Mark 14:32-41

The disciples heard Jesus teach with authority, saw him perform miracles, and had meals with him. Now they were invited to share in his vulnerable moments. Death is distressing and overwhelmingly sad to most of us, especially when we are not ready to die. However, Jesus was not distressed or sorrowful about dying or the way he would die. He was resolute about it (Mark 8:31, 10:33-34). What, then, was Jesus' distress about? Genesis 6:5-6 reveals:

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. (NIV)

Sin is not just a list of wrong-doings; it is our natural self. Regardless of our efforts not to sin, we are sinful by nature. How do you feel about your sinful nature? God is grieved. The consequence of sin is grave. In anguish, Jesus' sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22:44). Jesus was not powerless; rather, he chose to lay down his life (John 10:18, Mark 14:36b), bearing the weight of our sin.

REFLECTION

- 1 Ask God to search your heart and show you your sinful nature. Depict it in a drawing.
- 2 Through this passage, you are also invited to share in Jesus' vulnerable moment. What would you say to Jesus?
- 3 How far have you surrendered your will to God: 10%, 50%, 90% of the time? Are you able to pray: "not what I will, but what you will"? If not, why not? Talk about your struggle with a mature Christian friend. If yes, tell your friend specifically what you have surrendered to God.

Day 2

SCRIPTURE

Mark 14:41-56

Judas was not the only one who was disloyal to Jesus. Peter disowned him, and the rest of the disciples deserted him. Even an unnamed follower would rather run away naked than be identified with Jesus. Those who testified falsely against him deserted the truth for personal gain, as did the religious leaders who looked for evidence against him, and Pilate who handed him over to be crucified.

We are also guilty of disloyalty to Jesus when we choose to think and behave according to our sinful nature, such as when we give in to temptation, fail to keep a promise, or bury our God-given gifts and talents when we have opportunity to use them for good. We betray his love when we esteem something or some other person above him. We desert him when we are not bothered with him, and when we plan our lives without him in the picture. The list goes on.

REFLECTION

- 1 In what ways have you been loyal or disloyal to Jesus in your daily life in the past year?
- 2 If you have deserted Jesus, would you come back to him? Tell Jesus in a prayer.
- 3 If you want to discuss this further, do so with a mature Christian friend or group.

Day 3

SCRIPTURE

Mark 14:56-65, 15:1-32

The religious leaders were gathered. When asked to speak, Jesus could have lectured them. However, he remained silent and gave no answer. Again, Jesus could have defended himself before Pilate, but he made no reply. False accusations, mockery, insults and physical abuse kept mounting. He endured all that, not only to fulfil what the prophets wrote about him, but also because he was not leading a rebellion (Mark 14:48, NIV). He was demonstrating God's unconditional, steadfast love in which 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV) spells out:

Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

No matter the circumstance, love remains as described. Although God detests sin, God is not against us the sinner. He is interested in us (Romans 8:31-32). He loves his children (John 15:9). Yet there are times we doubt his love, especially when difficulties assail. During these times, we feel forced to carry the cross, we point fingers at him like the religious leaders, demanding him to prove himself. Some of us turn away claiming that He does not love us. Perhaps the question is not whether God exists or if He loves us, but whether or not we believe that He loves us.

REFLECTION

- 1 Do you have confidence in God's love for you? Talk with a mature Christian friend about any doubt that you may have.
- 2 If you had an opportunity to talk to Jesus at the crucifixion, what would you say to each other? Write out your dialogue with Jesus and share it with a trusted Christian friend.
- 3 Listen to the hymn "I Gave My Life For Thee" at the following URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWy1FoKAIYs>. What is your response to Jesus?

I Gave My Life for Thee

(Frances R. Havergal)

I gave My life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might ransomed be,
And raised up from the dead;
I gave, I gave My life for thee,
What hast thou giv'n for Me?
I gave, I gave My life for thee,
What hast thou giv'n for Me?

My Father's house of light,
My glory-circled throne
I left for earthly night,
For wand'rings sad and lone;
I left, I left it all for thee,
Hast thou left aught for Me?
I left, I left it all for thee,
Hast thou left aught for Me?

I suffered much for thee,
More than thy tongue can tell,
Of bitt'rest agony,
To rescue thee from hell;
I've borne, I've borne it all for thee,
What hast thou borne for Me?
I've borne, I've borne it all for thee,
What hast thou borne for Me?

And I have brought to thee,
Down from My home above,
Salvation full and free,
My pardon and My love;
I bring, I bring rich gifts to thee,
What hast thou brought to Me?
I bring, I bring rich gifts to thee,
What hast thou brought to Me?

Day 4

SCRIPTURE

Mark 15:33-47

Jesus died. The wages of sin paid. Although the Christian faith does not end in the death of Jesus, it is nonetheless an important place where every believer must come to. In order for Christ to live in us and for us to live for God, our own death to sin must occur (Romans 6:6). Oswald Chambers, in his book *My Utmost for His Highest*, wrote: "Sin must die in you—not simply be restrained, suppressed, or counteracted, but crucified...sin in you must be put to death." It is not surprising to find sin hard to die. Nonetheless, kill it; even if you have to do it multiple times. Be resolute about dying to sin. God has acted. How about you?

REFLECTION

- 1 Is sin in you killed? If you have not put sin to death, would you? Find or make something to represent the sin in you and get rid of it. Then find or make something to represent Christ in you and display it where you can remind yourself every day to die to your sinful nature and live for Christ.
- 2 If you are struggling to put sin to death, talk with a mature Christian friend about it and seek prayer support for your growth in godly living.
- 3 What tells you that sin is dead or living in you?