



NEW TESTAMENT • LESSON 37

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

God's forgiveness is available even to the worst sinners.



MONDAY

THE STORY: LUKE 23:32-34

Jesus spoke forgiveness, in the midst of His suffering. Jesus was crucified with a criminal on his left and another on his right. Isaiah prophesied about this when he wrote that the suffering servant would be “numbered with the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12). In Matthew 18:21-22 Jesus told Peter that forgiveness should extend to those who have sinned against us seventy times seven times! Jesus demonstrated here that His forgiveness extends to criminals and even to the men who put Him on the cross.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How is Jesus' prayer an example to us? (If Jesus was willing to forgive those who crucified Him, how much more should we be willing to forgive those who have sinned against us?)

Why is it hard to forgive? (It is hard to forgive because we want payment for our loss. Jesus says we should release others from that debt and forgive them.)

PRAY:

Ask God to help each member of your family to be quick to forgive.



TUESDAY

THE STORY: LUKE 23:35-38

Jesus was mocked. Even while the people stood and watched Jesus ask the Father to forgive them, they mocked Him. The people, the soldiers and even the rulers mocked Him. They saw the man who had made great claims about being God now suffering and bleeding like any man. What they didn't know is that Jesus was fully God while also being fully man. Even the sign above Jesus, meant to mock His claims, testified of His true position: Jesus was the King of the Jews.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why did the people mock Jesus? (It seemed to them that Jesus' claims were hollow, now that he was humiliated and dying. This was made clear by their comment in Luke 23:35: "He saved others let him save himself.")

Did the people know Jesus was saving others by His sacrifice? (No, they did not understand.)

If we were there, what do you think we would have done? (We would likely have either mocked Jesus or fled in fear.)

PRAY:

Thank Jesus for dying on the cross for our sins and for being willing to take insults in addition to the physical pain.



WEDNESDAY
WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

THE STORY: MARK 15:25-32

Mark tells us of the terrible insults hurled at Jesus during the Crucifixion. But Luke records that in the midst of the mocking and jeering, grace came to one man. Luke tells us the story of the repentant robber. Even a man on the verge of death, having lived a life of crime, can trust in Jesus. So effective is the work of Christ that it can carry the worst of sinners directly from the executioner's hand into paradise. The robber didn't know the full measure of truth behind the death of an innocent Savior, but he knew this: he was a sinner deserving of punishment and in need of the Messiah. The Holy Spirit gave this man the gift of faith to believe.

One day, we and all who trust in Christ will get the opportunity to talk with the man who hung upon a cross next to Christ. The question is, who will we be like: the repentant robber or the mocker?

TALK ABOUT IT:

How is the cross connected to the gospel? (The cross is the main component of the gospel. The cross is where the lamb, Jesus, was sacrificed and received the wrath of God for our sin. The other part of the gospel is His resurrection.)

Why did God choose the cross? (The cross was the one method of execution cursed by God [see Deuteronomy 21:23]). Paul makes this connection in Galatians 3:13.)

PRAY:

Thank Jesus for becoming a curse for us, that we might be forgiven like the robber.



THURSDAY

THE STORY: LUKE 23:39-43

One criminal joined the mocking of the crowd but the other criminal rebuked him. This criminal realized Jesus had done nothing wrong. Then in a remarkable demonstration of grace, the criminal defending Jesus placed His faith in Christ. Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42). Jesus replied, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” The arm of the Lord is not too short to save even a man who repents at the very last moment. In the midst of so much unbelief, we see here one man’s newfound faith. And he was rewarded for that faith with assurance from Christ and life in paradise.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What happened to the criminal who had faith in Jesus when he died? (Jesus said that he would be with Jesus in paradise, or heaven.)

Where will we immediately go when we die if we believe? (We will go to heaven as well.)

Where do you think the other criminal went? (There is no evidence the other criminal ever repented of his sin and trusted Jesus. If he died without trusting Christ, he went to hell.)

PRAY:

Pray the prayer of the criminal. Confess your sins and ask Jesus to remember you by pouring out His salvation upon you.



FRIDAY
ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

THE STORY: PSALM 22:17,18

The whole of Psalm 22, like Isaiah 53, is a prophetic picture of the Crucifixion. Psalm 22:18 accurately predicts the dividing up of Jesus' clothing by casting lots. This is found in Matthew 27:35, Mark 15:24, and Luke 23:34.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What do we learn about David (who wrote Psalm 22) by comparing it to the Gospel accounts of the Crucifixion? (We learn that David was a prophet as well as a king.)

How does David's being both prophet and king point to Jesus? (Jesus was both a prophet and a king.)

PRAY:

Thank God for the amazing way the story of Jesus is contained through all of Scripture.