



Small Group Discussion Guide: Week 2-The Uncomfortable Cross

Introduction:

We are in a new series called, *Uncomfortable*, which will help us embrace, understand, and see the beauty of being part of God's people. As Christians, we should not long for a life of comfort, but we should feel an uncomfortable tension by following Christ and becoming his disciples. Jesus did not call us to a life of comfort, but a life that is on mission for him.

We will explore what God is calling us to, and how following Christ will cost us something. Walking by the Spirit will call us into a deeper relationship with God, which should cause us to want to share Jesus with others. C.S Lewis says, "*If you want a religion that makes you feel really comfortable, I certainly don't recommend Christianity.*"

This week we will focus on “The Uncomfortable Cross” and what that means for the Christian. Think about this for a second, the cross is one of the most well-known symbols of Christianity, but its significance lies far deeper than the cross of Calvary. A symbol of death has been turned into a symbol of hope and grace.

The Persians invented the cross as a means of torture in 300-400 BC. But the Romans perfected the use of the cross as a means of death when they ascended to power. To die on a cross was a humiliating and prolonged way of death. For some it took 3-4 days for death to occur. It was used as a symbolic statement that you should not cross the Roman government.

Today, however, many people wear a cross on their necks as a piece of jewelry not really understanding the full meaning of the how God took a symbol of death and made it a symbol of hope for a lost and dying world. God did not call the Christian to a life of comfort, but to a life of obedience and faithfulness. Living a life of obedience should cause the believer to want to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow after Jesus. (Mark 8:34) If you follow Jesus long enough, it will take you to the cross. What looks like ultimate weakness (the cross) and defeat is the ultimate display of power over sin and death

Scripture for this week: Matthew 20:20-26 &

[Read Matthew 20:20-28](#)

Discussion Questions

Question 1: Why do you think the mom asked Jesus if her sons could sit at the right hand and left of Jesus in the kingdom? (vs. 21)

- Do you think she thought her two sons were more important than the other disciples?
- What do you think her intent was in asking Jesus this request.

(Leader Insight) Say: The mother of James and John came to Jesus and asked him if he could grant that her two sons sit at Jesus’ right and left hand. The two sons of Zebedee were James and John. They were often referred to as the “sons of thunder”. This mother took an appropriate posture and position as she knelt before Jesus when she approached him, but her intentions were still self-serving. She wanted to make sure that James and John had a prominent place in heaven. Jesus replies to them and tells them, “you do not know what you are asking”

Question 2: In verse 22, Jesus asks the disciples, “Can you drink of the cup that I am going to drink? What cup is Jesus referring too?”

- Discuss what it means to “take up your cross and follow Jesus!”
- What does that look like today?

(Leader Insight) The cup Jesus was referring too, was the wrath that God was going to pour out on him for the sins of the world. He was going to be betrayed, arrested, beaten, mocked, spit on,

ridiculed, shamed, and ultimately crucified for the sins of the world. John 1:29 tells us that *Jesus was the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*. Jesus was about to become the ultimate sacrifice for sin. Jesus was talking about his death on the cross and how the cup that he was going to drink would ultimately cost him his life. Jesus is asking his disciples, if they could or would drink from the cup like he would. The disciples didn't understand that he was talking about their own deaths as well, when he asked them if they could drink of this cup.

The cross is considered foolishness and weakness to those who don't understand. Read the passage found in 1:18-29

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-29

1 Corinthians 1:18 *"For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved. For the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek wisdom,*

1 Corinthians 1: 22-25 *"For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.*

²⁴ *Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God,*

²⁵ *because God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength".*

Question 3: How is the cross considered foolishness and a sign of weakness? Discuss.

- Why does Paul call the cross of Christ a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles? (Vs. 23)
- Explain what this means

Leader insight: The cross is foolishness to the ones who don't believe in the power it has to offer. People don't understand why anyone would do this for people who don't care or want to believe. The cross that was a device of torture became the ultimate display of love and hope for people who believe. The world says this is crazy and cruel, but God says it is beautiful and redeeming. The cross is a stumbling block for the Jews because it went against everything they believed about God, and the one who would come. The Jews could not get over the fact that God would give up his own son so that mankind could be redeemed. They were looking for a conquering military hero, not someone who went willingly to his own death. Therefore, the cross is a stumbling block to their faith.

Question 4: Read 1 Corinthians 1:25-28. Jesus tells his disciples. *"But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

- What is Jesus telling his disciples to do?
- Discuss what Jesus means when he says whoever wants to be great will be a servant.

- What does this look like today?

Next Steps

- 1. Share one small “next step” that you feel God is calling you to take in the next 7 days.**
- 2. Take time and reflect or journal how much the cross means to you.**
- 3. Where is God calling you to lose your life and become *Uncomfortable*?**
- 4. Pray that God will provide you an opportunity to share the hope you have with someone else. Share your story with a neighbor or family member.**

Pray & Dismiss