

## April 11: EASTER – the Cross

*Gather: Bible, paper, pen*

**Introduction:** It is that time of year when we celebrate how Jesus died and rose again to save us from our sin and give us a way to be with God once more. Today, we will focus on Jesus dying on the cross and what it means for us.

### Review

In the last two weeks we studied the 12 Disciples that Jesus called to do learn from him and do ministry with him. Do you remember all 12?

- |    |     |     |     |
|----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. | 2.  | 3.  | 4.  |
| 5. | 6.  | 7.  | 8.  |
| 9. | 10. | 11. | 12. |

What is one thing you learned from the disciples?

### Reflection:

Have you ever had a friend that hurt you? Maybe they lied to you or told someone your secret. Maybe you had a fight with them. Did you stay friends? Was it hard to forgive them?

Think about what happened and then imagine it happened repeatedly. Would you still be their friend?

No matter how small the wrong, it can be hard to keep loving people who hurt us over and over. Though we might give up on people, Jesus showed us that he won't give up on us.

### The Cross:

Start by reading the story of Jesus' death on the cross in **John 19**. (The other readings of this are Matthew 27, Mark 15, and Luke 23).

What stands out to you?

Some questions to ponder:

- Why did the soldiers divide Jesus' clothes?
- Why did Pilate have a sign attached to Jesus' cross?
- Who was by the cross?
- What were the differences in how the two thieves were treated and how Jesus was?
- Why ask John to look after his mother?
- Why did John record these events? (verse 35)
- What did Jesus mean by "It is finished"?
- Why did Jesus have to die at all?

### So Now What?

Jesus died for the sinners, for the mockers, the abusers, the gluttons, the tax collectors, the liars, the prostitutes, the cheaters and the proud. He died for people who hated him (think about Paul persecuting Christians later on in the New Testament). He died for people who doubted (even his own disciples. Jesus died for us, even though we have continued to sin against him over and over. Through his death, we are saved and can be with God. Sin no longer has a hold. His love is far beyond what we can give to each other. No matter what you do, Jesus will never stop loving you.

Listen to and reflect on the song **Never Stop Loving** by Jeremy Camp.

No matter what, Jesus will love us. That doesn't mean we should keep on sinning when we know it's wrong but it does mean that when we do mess up, we know that we can return to his open and loving arms. This unconditional love is one that we are asked to extend to others. See **John 15:12**.

How can you show that kind of love to the people around you this week?

**Prayer:** Using a sticky note, whiteboard, or other displayable method, write down the names of people who are hard to love. Pray for those people, for help to love them, forgive them, for patience and for ways to show God's love. Pray for them and loving them throughout the week.

**Memory Verse:** John 15:12. "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

**Challenge:** Each day, pick a song or verse to meditate on the story of the cross and how you can show the same kind of love he showed us, to others:

- Lead Me to the Cross – Hillsong United
- In Christ Alone – Kristian Stanfill
- This is Amazing Grace – Phil Wickham
- Jesus Paid it All – Kristian Stanfill
- Luke 6:27-36
- Romans 3:21-26
- Romans 5:1-11
- 1 John 4:7-21
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7