



## LEADER'S GUIDE – April 14

**Series Overview:** As a life ends, words matter. Some bring closure, others fall short and leave us questioning. Some speak healing, others cause deeper wounds. But no matter what is said, last words last. This is no different with the last words of Jesus; but Jesus' last words didn't just last, they changed the world. During this series, we will look at Jesus' words on the cross and how not just his words, have changed our life forever.

**OPENING QUESTION:** As we look at today's passage, we will be discussing the topic of abandonment. Whether small or big, all of us have experienced this feeling. What are some of the impacts that abandonment can have on people?

### PRIMARY PASSAGE

**Matthew 27:35-46:** <sup>35</sup> When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. <sup>36</sup> And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. <sup>37</sup> Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. <sup>38</sup> Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>39</sup> Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads <sup>40</sup> and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" <sup>41</sup> In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. <sup>42</sup> "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. <sup>43</sup> He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" <sup>44</sup> In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

<sup>45</sup> From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. <sup>46</sup> About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" (which means "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*").

**1.) One of Jesus final words was “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” There is a lot of conversation around the meaning of this verse. What do you think it means?** This conversation could go in a lot of different directions. Some of the main points

- **Jesus was abandoned.** Jesus felt abandonment from the Father, because he became sin, so that he may take God’s holy wrath on our behalf. See 2 Corinthians 5:21.
- **God doesn’t fully abandon:** Spoiler Alert -> 3 days later God raises him from the dead!
- **God forsakes Jesus judicially, not relationally.** You see this in that last week’s phrases began with “Father” and this week’s begins with “God.” A helpful way to understand this is a judge who has to sentence his son. He doesn’t stop being his father, but he still has to give a just verdict.
- **“It was a cry of distress, but not of distrust”(Arthur Pink).** Jesus was in anguish, but he didn’t question the goodness of his Father.

**2.) How can we be confident that God will not forsake us? What verses give us this confidence?**

- *2 Corinthians 5:21* explains the beautiful exchange. Jesus took on man’s sin and death. We took on Jesus’ righteousness and life.
- *John 14:25-27* speaks about the Holy Spirit being given to us.
- *Hebrews 13:5* speaks about never abandoning us.
- *The resurrection.* Jesus wasn’t abandoned. He was raised from the dead three days later.

**3.) If it is true that God will not forsake me, why are there times where God feels distant?** There are a lot of good perspectives on this. Here are a few:

- **We interpret our perception as reality.** Just because we perceive God’s absence doesn’t mean that he is.
- **We are listening to lies instead of speaking truth.** Martin Lloyd-Jones said, “Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?” The world teaches us to trust our feelings. Considering we are sinful and our heart is deceitful, this is terrible advice. We don’t fully ignore feelings, but we must interpret those feelings through the truth of the Gospel.
- **We have drifted from God; God has not drifted from us.** Often, there is sin in our life and we are believing lies and we push God away. Think about the story of the Prodigal Son. We are the cause for feeling distant from God, not the other way around. He always is chasing us.

**4.) In Jesus’ darkest moments, he turns to the Word of God (Psalms 22). What verse do you need to recall to remember that God will never forsake you?** There is no right or wrong verse for this. What you want to do is to get your group to think about how they can speak truth over their life in times where they are feeling abandoned by God. [*Fun conversation-Read Psalms 22:1-2 and see gloom. Then read the end of the verses 27-31 and you see ultimate triumph. Jesus was ultimately using this Messianic prophecy to say that despite this dark moment, God would be glorified and all nations would worship him.*]

## PERSONAL RESPONSE

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**Spiritual abandonment is always a product of us drifting from God, not God drifting from us. Often, we believe lies or are living out of line with how God has called us to live. The good news is that James 4:8 gives us confidence that if we draw near to God, he will draw near to us. Three questions to reflect on:**

- **Why do I feel abandoned? Do these reasons align with what God’s Word says?**
- **What lies am I believing about God and what verses will remind me of the truth?**
- **Who will I share this struggle with this week and ask for their prayers and encouragement?**

