

one groups

Conversation Guide

THE FINAL WORDS
OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

Last
Words



BRENTVIEW

Est. 1962

SUGGESTED MEETING FLOW

Total Meeting Time: 1hr 45mins (*Times included below as an example*)

Time	Activity	Purpose
20 Mins 6pm - 6:20pm	Hang out, serve food, settle kids in [if relevant]	Enjoy time together!
5 Mins 6:20pm - 6:25pm	While still eating, gather together. Open with a brief welcome from the One Group Leader and spend time opening in prayer. [If anyone is new, make sure everyone says their name, etc.]	An important transition. Prayer and choosing an intentional posture to step into the “formal” part of the meeting is going to make the time meaningful.
10 Mins 6:25pm - 6:35pm	Question for conversation: What is something you believed when you were a child that you wish were still true today? (Have fun!)	This helps us to remember the value of having fun together!
35 Mins 6:35pm - 7:10pm	Sermon-Based Conversation <i>See Guide Below</i>	Each week we will explore core ideas from the previous sermon.
20 Mins 7:10pm - 7:30pm	The Prayer Practice of Examen (see guide) Pray together: Invite one or two people to pray over what was named in the discussion, for the group as a whole, and for the broader Brentview family.	This helps us set a tone for our group. We are stepping into brave spaces of authenticity together. Prayer is a key element to what makes a One Group more than a socializing event.
15 Mins 7:30pm - 7:45pm	Hang out, eat left over food and/or dessert. Make sure to help with clean-up!	Fun matters. Enjoy time together.



SERMON-BASED CONVERSATION & FORMATION

Last Words #4 - Not Abandoned

Briefly Debrief the Spiritual Practice (5 mins)

Take a brief moment to allow people to share about their experiences with the previous week's practice. If you didn't engage, no reason to feel bad. This is an optional practice for those wanting something to incorporate into their devotional lives each week.

Review (5 mins)

Take a moment to remember the main ideas from the message. Use the notes as a refresher.

Main Idea: "God is near even when he seems far."

- **Summary:** Jesus is someone we can relate to when we feel abandoned, lonely, or doubtful when it comes to our relationship with God. Naming our real struggles in life and with God gives us freedom to take our relationship with Jesus to deeper spaces.

Sub Points (God is near even when he seems far.)

- Jesus quotes the first line of a familiar song, bringing to mind all of the lyrics.
 - ➔ "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me" is the first line of Psalm 22. For ancient Jews, to quote the first line of a passage calls to mind its whole context. It starts with "forsaken/abandoned" but ends with God's presence and faithfulness.
- Jesus *feels* abandoned...
 - ➔ This is his way of expressing the full weight of his human experience on the cross. The feeling of abandonment by God the Father is valid for Jesus.
- [Jesus feels abandoned...] But actually is not...
 - ➔ This is the whole point of his quotation: Jesus expresses his experience of feeling distant from God with the confidence that his feelings (while valid) don't get the final word. God will do for him what the writer of Psalm 22 experienced.
- [Jesus feels abandoned but actually is not...] and neither are you.
 - ➔ Pain blocks our perception, but never God's pursuit. There are external realities that block our perception of God's loving pursuit of us: demonic forces of evil that seek to corrupt God's good world and our lives, circumstances that are painful, etc. On a rare occasion, God may 'pull back' intentionally to help us seek him in new ways, but never with the intention to leave us alone. In all of this, God will redeem doubts as an opportunity to grow in our trust of Jesus.
- **Application:** If "certainty" — then ask God a hard question that challenges you. If "doubt and/or abandoned" — then recall experiences you've had with God that were real.
 - ➔ "A true and living faith is never a destination; it's a journey. And to move forward on this journey we need doubt. Faith is not based on certainty. ... This kind of doubt makes room for us to struggle on the inside of our relationship with Jesus because our faith is not found in how certain we are, but in the faithfulness of Christ. ... Doubts that you explore within your relationship with Jesus can give you the space to wrestle toward an ever-deepening, increasingly intimate relationship with another. Doubt is not the enemy of faith. It's a much-needed companion." - Greg Boyd, *Benefit of the Doubt*, 150-152

Read the Scriptures Together (10 mins)

Read each passage aloud as a group in a posture of prayer. Then, read them twice more. ***As you hear the passages, notice a word or phrase that makes an impact on you.***

29 People walking by insulted him, shaking their heads and saying, “Ha! So you were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, were you? 30 Save yourself and come down from that cross!”

31 In the same way, the chief priests were making fun of him among themselves, together with the legal experts. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself. 32 Let the Christ, the king of Israel, come down from the cross. Then we’ll see and believe.” Even those who had been crucified with Jesus insulted him.

33 From noon until three in the afternoon the whole earth was dark. 34 At three, Jesus cried out with a loud shout, “Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani,” which means, “My God, my God, why have you left [or abandoned] me?”
(Mark 15:29-35, CEB)

1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? 2 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. **(Psalm 22:1-2, NRSV)**

24 For he [God] has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him [me] but has listened to his [my] cry for help. **(Psalm 22:1-2, NIV)**

30 Future descendants will serve him; generations to come will be told about my Lord. 31 They will proclaim God’s righteousness to those not yet born, telling them what God has done. **(Psalm 22:30-31, CEB)**

20 But you, dear friends: build each other up on the foundation of your most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep each other in the love of God, wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will give you eternal life. 22 Have mercy on those who doubt. **(Jude 20-22, CEB)**

Conversation (15 mins)

(It’s okay if you only make it through one or two of these questions. The point is that we want to have spiritual conversations that both challenge and invite us to follow Jesus, seek the Spirit, and experience the Father’s compassion.)

#1 Invite a couple of people to share about a word, phrase, or idea that made an impact on them. What might God be inviting you to notice about your own life, in light of this?

#2 If you didn’t know the context of Psalm 22, how might it change the significance of Jesus’s words from the cross? How might that perspective, change our picture of God’s posture towards us in times of struggle? What picture of God do we see if we read this story alongside Psalm 22?

#3 Do you ever struggle with doubt or a sense that God is distant? Some doubt that God exists, etc. Others may doubt that God cares. While others may doubt some of the “extras” that Christians sometimes add to how we read the Scriptures on relevant topics. What does doubt look like for you?

#4 What do you sense Jesus is inviting you to consider when it comes to our conversation so far? (In our prayer time, we will have a chance to listen to God even more.)

The Practice of Examen and Prayer (20 mins)

Take 5 mins of silence together. Reflect on the past several days and/or week.

- * Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you in the silence, as you reflect back on your week.
- * Offer gratitude to Jesus for whatever has brought you joy recently. Can you think of 3 things you are grateful for in this moment?
- * Review the past week. What has been “life-draining?” What has been “life-giving?”
- * Ask Jesus to help you see him at work in the highs and lows you encounter.

Helpful Things to Note:

- * *Life-giving: I sense that God has been at work in my family....*
- * *Life-draining: I have a friend at work who just lost her husband....)*
- * A solid group response when real needs arise: “How can we help?”

Dialogue

What is one thing Jesus is inviting you to notice based on our conversation today?
Is there a “life-draining” or “life-giving” area of your life that you’d like to share with the group?

Remember: “How can we help?” is a great question when appropriate.

Pray Together

Invite one or two people to pray over what was named in the discussion, for the group as a whole, and for the broader Brentview family.

TAKE-HOME FORMATION EXERCISE

Meditate on the following passage. Read it slowly and prayerfully.

1 My God! My God, why have you left me all alone? Why are you so far from saving me—so far from my anguished groans?

2 My God, I cry out during the day, but you don't answer; even at nighttime I don't stop.

3 You are the holy one, enthroned. You are Israel's praise.

4 Our ancestors trusted you—they trusted you and you rescued them;

5 they cried out to you and they were saved; they trusted you and they weren't ashamed.

7 All who see me make fun of me—they gape, shaking their heads:

8 "He committed himself to the Lord, so let God rescue him; let God deliver him because God likes him so much."

11 Please don't be far from me, because trouble is near and there's no one to help.

14 I'm poured out like water. All my bones have fallen apart. My heart is like wax; it melts inside me.

16 Dogs surround me; a pack of evil people circle me like a lion—oh, my poor hands and feet!

17 I can count all my bones! Meanwhile, they just stare at me, watching me.

18 They divvy up my garments among themselves; they cast lots for my clothes.

19 But you, Lord! Don't be far away! You are my strength! Come quick and help me!

20 Deliver me from the sword. Deliver my life from the power of the dog.

21 Save me from the mouth of the lion. From the horns of the wild oxen you have answered me!

24 Because he didn't despise or detest the suffering of the one who suffered—he didn't hide his face from me. No, he listened when I cried out to him for help.

25 I offer praise in the great congregation because of you; I will fulfill my promises in the presence of those who honour God.

26 Let all those who are suffering eat and be full! Let all who seek the Lord praise him! I pray your hearts live forever!

29 Indeed, all the earth's powerful will worship him; all who are descending to the dust will kneel before him; my being also lives for him.

30 Future descendants will serve him; generations to come will be told about my Lord.

31 They will proclaim God's righteousness to those not yet born, telling them what God has done.

(Psalm 22, selected verses, CEB)

Prompts for Reflection:

What phrase makes an immediate impact on you? Meditate on it with Jesus.

Do you notice the connections of this passage to the crucifixion story itself? How do you sense Jesus walking with you when you face your own adversity or struggles?

What is God inviting you to notice about your life? Pray and journal about this.

[Space for Journaling and/or Notes]

WHERE ARE WE IN THE CURRENT GROUPS RHYTHM?

- Summer Quarter: this is a season of rest for our groups.
- At the start of each quarter, we all gather at the church for a Groups Launch Party!
- Each quarter is about 11 weeks long
- Each Group meets once per week. While Wednesday is a great choice for a weekly Group, we know that some will choose to meet on other days.

WHAT HAPPENS WEEK-BY-WEEK (BIG PICTURE)?

- **WEEK 1:** Church-wide Groups Launch Party! (Wednesday night, 7pm)
- **WEEK 2:** First meeting as a group, likely in a home (but not limited to this). Review shared commitments which will be finalized in week 3. This includes, but isn't limited to, your group's involvement in the current FOR Calgary initiative.
- **WEEK 3:** Finalize Shared Commitments. (See Attached)
- **WEEKS 4-10:** Do life together! Meet weekly, utilizing the materials provided—for One Groups, this is sermon-based discussion, etc.
- **WEEK 11:** Reflect on the last 10 weeks. Engage in sermon-based conversation. Fill out One Group reflection sheets. Put the following Quarter on the calendar!
- **BETWEEN QUARTERS:** At Brentview, we highly value margin in the calendar. We create clear and predictable rhythms for our Groups so that they are highly accessible and deeply intentional. Also, more margin means that your group can “organically” create times for having fun together. How will you all continue to be in relationship during the gaps in Quarters? Meals, parties, outings, movies, kids play-dates, etc. are some ideas to start with! The December break, for instance, creates a great opportunity for Christmas parties, walking with a hot drink to look at lights, etc.