



Connect to God

Leader's Guide

Week 4

Topic: Why did Jesus have to die?

PREWORK Before Class: Read the entire leader's guide and watch the video online. This week only features a Teaching Video – no Testimony is included. In addition, review the steps at the end of this section in regards to guiding someone to accept Christ if they desire and understand their need to be saved.

Script ****

Speaker: Alan White, Family Life Pastor (5 min)

In the beginning

When the entirety of the Bible is considered, from Genesis 1-Revelation 22, we see that God created mankind for relationship with Himself. He saw everything he had made and declared it good. God enjoyed a personal relationship with mankind until they broke that relationship through sin and disobedience. Because God is holy and perfect, he could no longer be in relationship with sinful man. But God so loved the world, that he made a way for man to approach him once again.

The Old Covenant

God provided a temporary covenant through the blood of animals in the Old Testament. This shedding of blood would atone, or cover, the sins of the people for one year. We know this as the Day of Atonement. Details for how this is to be achieved are given with God's laws for his people in Leviticus. "On this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins." (Leviticus 16:30) But goats and bulls cannot impart the righteousness we need to be in a personal, continual relationship with God. This is a temporary fix to man's sin problem.

The New Covenant

God would eventually provide an eternal covenant through the blood of Jesus. John the Baptist recognizes Jesus' purpose and mission when he declares, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) He understood that Jesus came to be the sacrifice that permanently covers all man's sins.

Why did it have to be Jesus? Only Jesus' blood can forgive and erase our sins. No human could have paid this debt, as all humans are born sinful (original sin). Romans chapter 3 tells us, "There is no one righteous, not even one. . . all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Only the death of someone sinless could cover our sins and reconcile us with God. This is why

being “good”, moral, and an upstanding citizen, can’t reconnect us with God in this life or for eternity. In fact, Isaiah says “all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” compared to the perfect and holy God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 explains God’s plan to redeem us, “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them.”

We must accept God’s offer of eternal life through Christ on God’s terms. Jesus taught his disciples, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6) Jesus would not have suffered and died if there were any other way for us to be reconciled to God. In the Garden of Gethsemane, right before he was arrested and crucified, he asked his Father if there was any other way. Since he was immediately arrested, we know his death was the only bridge capable of connecting us with God. Jesus is the only way to the Father, but how we come to Jesus is a result of the Holy Spirit’s conviction, the wooing of Jesus knocking at our heart’s door, the testimony of Christians – the mysterious ways of God. God never stops inviting us into relationship with him, both now and for eternity.

End Script****

Scriptures to review:

John 3:1-21

Ecclesiastes 3:10

Numbers 21:8-9

Leviticus 16:30

Isaiah 64:6

John 1:29

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Mark 10:45

Romans 3:10, 23

I John 1:7-9

Hebrews 10:19-25

Romans 5:8

Tough questions prep:

1. Question: Why does blood play such a significant role to God?

Answer: *Blood is a sign or symbol of a covenant/contract or agreement. Throughout scripture we see that blood represents life. This signifies those entering the covenant do so with their whole lives. Giving blood is a symbolic act of generosity; giving your entire life through your blood is the ultimate expression of love. Jesus said in John 15:13 “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”*

2. Question/Issue: It seems unfair that only those who have heard of Jesus have an opportunity for eternal life.

Answer: Jesus tells us that no one can approach the Father except through the Son, himself. What he doesn't share with us is how people come to Jesus. God has chosen not to divulge the particulars or establish a set of rules for this. He sees the heart, and since he is perfectly just, we can trust him to bring to himself those whom he determines.

Review the steps of guiding someone to accept Christ if they desire and understand their need to be saved:

Be prepared help them accept Christ, pray over them, welcome them into the Family of God.

Going to heaven is a SIMPLE as ABC.

A) ADMIT YOU ARE A SINNER

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

A sinner needs to acknowledge that they have sinned.

B) BELIEVE THAT JESUS DIED FOR YOUR SINS, ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND THAT YOU TRUST IN HIM ALONE FOR YOUR SALVATION, COMMITTING YOUR LIFE TO HIS SERVICE.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." (Acts 16:31)

All Jesus asks us to do to receive salvation is to believe in Him.

C) CONFESS YOUR SINS.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins." (1 John 1:9)

We only need to tell Jesus that we have sinned and ask for forgiveness. Then He will forgive us, no matter what sins we have committed.

Follow these steps

1. You need to be saved.

"There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10 quoting Ecclesiastes 7:20)

2. You can not save yourself.

"For by grace you have been saved, by faith, and that faith is not of yourselves; it is a gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

3. God loves us enough to provide salvation.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

4. By faith, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

"And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." (Acts 16:31)

"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)

If you would like to invite Jesus into your life, repeat this prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I understand that I am a sinner and I ask You for forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins so that I could receive Your forgiveness and have eternal life. I ask

You to come into my life right now and become my personal Savior. From this day forward, Lord, I give you control of my life. Make me a new person and help me to live for You.
Amen

Introduce to the Connect Pastor for baptism, membership, and discipleship through these classes and more. (some believe these steps are needed if they were baptized as young children without memory of it and we can do a Baptism of Remembrance for them).

Class Timeline:

	Estimated time
1 Introductions	15 min
2 Play the Teaching Video	Pastor Alan White 5 min
3 Discussion Questions	20 min
4 Takeaways (Page 19)	1 min
5 Prayer	1 min
6 Invitation for next week	1 min

1. Introduce the content and video for this class (in your own words):

Last week we discussed who Jesus is, and now we'll examine why Jesus had to die. That question could be asked of us all. Why do any of us have to die? It is the way of all the earth. No one is exempt from death; it is a natural part of life. But what separates our death from Jesus' death is significant. We cannot avoid death. Jesus is immortal but chose death. Jesus died so we can have eternal life.

The purpose of Jesus' life was to sacrifice for us so we can have eternal life. In Mark 10:45 Jesus summarizes his life's purpose, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." This level of sacrifice is foreign to our self-focused human thinking. Even Nicodemus, a Pharisee and expert teacher of the law, couldn't grasp this concept, and Jesus himself was explaining it to him!

We will discuss the implication of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for us. Ecclesiastes 3:10 tells us that God has placed eternity in our hearts. Nicodemus comes to Jesus looking for an answer to this question, and Jesus answers in a way that made little sense to Nicodemus at the time but made more sense after his death and resurrection (John 3:1-15). Jesus uses the term "Born Again" only once in scripture and it was to explain this issue.

In this dialogue, Jesus references an Old Testament passage from Numbers 21:8-9 concerning the snake on the pole. When God's people were wandering in the desert, venomous snakes were biting and killing the people. The only cure was given by God to Moses which was to erect a pole with a bronze snake wrapped around it. When the people looked at it, they were healed and would live. This is still the symbol of healing the medical world uses today. Jesus uses this reference to himself, that sin, just like venom, kills, but he takes our sin on himself and if we look

to him, by faith we too can live. Jesus' cure, however, not only provides fuller years of life on Earth but also eternal life in Heaven.

2. Play the teaching video (5:11).

3. Discussion questions (pages 17 and 18):

1. What does the word sacrifice mean to you?
2. What is the greatest example of human sacrifice you have ever heard or experienced?
3. Why are sacrifice and redemption important parts of the human story?
4. How would you explain Jesus' sacrifice for the world?

Offer: If you have not had a chance to accept Jesus as your Savior and would like to discuss or pray together, please stay after class so we can discuss further.

4. Closing / takeaways in your own words (page 19)

Out of His great love for us, God created us, lost us through sin and bought us back through Christ. The invitation to eternal life is extended, it is now upon to us to RSVP.

Invite them back next week to learn 'How God guides us'.

5. Prayer:

Instead of including a lesson devoted to how to pray, class leaders will model how to pray each of the six weeks of Connect to God. Before you close in prayer, briefly explain P.R.A.Y. method of prayer (praise, repent, ask and yield) and lead participants through this format. Then pray over them.

PRAISE	Matthew 6:9	"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'"
REPENT	Matthew 6:12	"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."
ASK	Matthew 6:11&13	"Give us this day our daily bread." "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]"
YIELD	Matthew 6:10	"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven."

Example: *Father, we praise that you are loving and compassionate. Please forgive us when we forget who you really are and think less of you. Father, all good things come from you. Please help us to seek and follow you. We trust you and desire to know you more.*

6. Invite them back next week

Follow up with anyone in the class that has NOT accepted Christ or wants to do it again (some believe that is needed and we can do a Baptism of Remembrance).