

LifeChange

A NAVPRESS BIBLE STUDY SERIES

*A life-changing
encounter with God's Word*

JESUS' PASSION WEEK

*Our Savior's final days on earth
show us His love, character, and mission.*

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NavPress 

A NavPress resource published in alliance
with Tyndale House Publishers

Jesus' Passion Week: A Bible Study on Our Savior's Last Days and Ultimate Sacrifice

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Objectives

The topical guides in the LifeChange series of Bible studies cover important topics from the Bible. Although the LifeChange guides vary with the topics they explore, they share some common goals:

1. to help readers grasp what key passages in the Bible say about the topic;
2. to provide readers with explanatory notes, word definitions, historical background, and cross-references so that the only other reference they need is the Bible;
3. to teach readers how to let God's Word transform them into Christ's image;
4. to provide small groups with a tool that will enhance group discussion of each passage and topic; and
5. to write each session so that advance preparation for group members is strongly encouraged but not required.

Each lesson in this study is designed to take forty-five minutes to complete.

Overview and Details

The study begins with an overview of Jesus' Passion Week and journey to the Cross. The key to interpretation for each part of this study is content (what is the referenced passage *about*?), and the key to context is purpose (what is the author's *aim* for the passage as it relates to the overall topic?). Each lesson of the study explores the story from Jesus' final week on earth with a corresponding passage from the Bible.

Kinds of Questions

Bible study provides different lenses and perspectives through which to engage the Scripture: observe (what does the passage *say*?), interpret (what does the passage *mean*?), and apply (how does this truth *affect* my life?). Some of the “how” and “why” questions will take some creative thinking, even prayer, to answer. Some are opinion questions without clear-cut right answers; these will lend themselves to discussions and side studies.

Don't let your study become an exercise in knowledge alone. Treat the passage as God's Word, and stay in dialogue with Him as you study. Pray, *Lord, what do You want me to see here?*, *Father, why is this true?*, and *Lord, how does this apply to my life?*

It is important that you write down your answers. The act of writing clarifies your thinking and helps you to remember what you're learning.

Study Aids

Throughout the guide, there are study aids that provide background information on the passage, insights from commentaries, and word studies. These aids are included in the guide to help you interpret the Bible without needing to use other, outside resources. Still, if you're interested in exploring further, the full resources are listed in the endnotes.

Scripture Versions

Unless otherwise indicated, the Bible quotations in this guide are from the New International Version of the Bible. The other versions cited are the English Standard Version and the New Living Translation.

Use any translation you like for study—or preferably more than one. Ideally you would have on hand a good, modern translation such as the New International Version, the English Standard Version, the New Living Translation, or the Christian Standard Bible. A paraphrase such as *The Message* is not accurate enough for study, but it can be helpful for comparison or devotional reading.

Memorizing and Meditating

A psalmist wrote, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). If you write down a verse or passage that challenges or encourages you and reflect on it often for a week or more, you will find it beginning to affect your motives and actions. We forget quickly what we read once; we remember what we ponder.

When you find a significant verse or passage, you might copy it onto a card to keep with you. Set aside five minutes each day just to think about what the passage might mean in your life. Recite it to yourself, exploring its meaning. Then, return

to the passage as often as you can during the day for a brief review. You will soon find it coming to mind spontaneously.

For Group Study

A group of four to ten people allows for the richest discussions, but you can adapt this guide for other-sized groups. It will suit a wide range of group types, such as home Bible studies, growth groups, youth groups, and workplace Bible studies. Both new and experienced Bible students, and new and mature Christians, will benefit from the guide. You can omit or leave for later any questions you find too easy or too hard.

The guide is intended to lead a group through one lesson per meeting. This guide is formatted so you will be able to discuss each of the questions at length. Be sure to make time at each discussion for members to ask about anything they didn't understand.

Each member should prepare for a meeting by writing answers for all the background and discussion questions to be covered. Application will be very difficult, however, without private thought and prayer.

Two reasons for studying in a group are accountability and support. When each member commits in front of the rest to seek growth in an area of life, you can pray for one another, listen jointly for God's guidance, help one another resist temptation, assure each other that each person's growth matters to you, use the group to practice spiritual principles, and so on. Pray about one another's commitments and needs at most meetings. If you wish, you can spend the first few minutes of each meeting sharing any results from applications prompted by previous lessons and discuss new applications toward the end of the meeting. Follow your time of sharing with prayer for these and other needs.

If you write down what others have shared, you are more likely to remember to pray for them during the week, ask about what they shared at the next meeting, and notice answered prayers. You might want to get a notebook for prayer requests and discussion notes.

Taking notes during discussion will help you remember to follow up on ideas, stay on the subject, and have clarity on an issue. But don't let note-taking keep you from participating.

Some best practices for groups:

1. If possible, come to the group discussion prepared. The more each group member knows about the passage and the questions being asked, the better your discussion will be.
2. Realize that the group leader will not be teaching from the passage but instead will be facilitating your discussion. Therefore, it is important for each group member to participate so that everyone can contribute to what you learn as a group.
3. Try to stick to the passage covered in the session and the specific questions in the study guide.

4. Listen attentively to the other members of the group when they are sharing their thoughts about the passage. Also realize that most of the questions are open-ended, allowing for more than one answer.
5. Be careful not to dominate the discussion—especially if you are the leader. Allow time for everyone to share their thoughts and ideas.
6. As mentioned previously, throughout the session are study aids that provide background information on the passage, insights from commentaries, and word studies. Reading these aloud during the meeting is optional and up to the discussion leader. However, each member can refer to these insights if they found them helpful in understanding the passage.

A Note on Topical Studies

LifeChange guides offer robust and thoughtful engagement with God's Word. The book-centric guides focus on a step-by-step walk through that particular book of the Bible. The topical studies use Scripture to help you engage more deeply with God's Word and its implications for your life.

JESUS' PASSION WEEK

IF YOU KNEW YOU ONLY HAD ONE WEEK LEFT TO LIVE, what would you do? Who would you see, and what would you say to them?

Jesus' last week on earth is called the Passion Week. *Passio* is a Latin rendering of the Greek word *pathos*. The word connotes suffering, deep emotion, and longing.¹ Our final words and actions reveal what we are truly passionate about and what kind of legacy we want to leave. In this LifeChange study guide, we'll look closely at Jesus' last week leading up to the Crucifixion to understand the deep longings of His heart and the mission He came to accomplish.

The passionate love of God moved Jesus to enter the sufferings of humankind and endure the Cross. Both love and agony accompanied Jesus through each day of Passion Week.

- On Sunday, Jesus wept as He longed for His people to experience true peace and escape the consequences of Jerusalem's future destruction.
- On Monday, moved by holy anger, Jesus cleansed the Temple to remove obstacles that kept Gentiles and people experiencing poverty from being able to worship God.
- On Tuesday, in the face of great hostility, Jesus amazed the crowd by teaching with an authority that demonstrated His divine kingship.
- On Wednesday, Jesus graciously welcomed and received a woman who anointed Him in preparation for burial.
- On Thursday, Jesus demonstrated the full extent of His love to His disciples by washing their feet and giving them the gift of the Last Supper. Later that evening, His prayers at the garden of Gethsemane revealed His deep agony and submission to the Father's will.
- On Friday, Jesus performed the ultimate act of love by laying down His life on the cross to redeem the world.

Jesus' last days show that He was not just leaving behind a legacy; He was launching a new kingdom. This kingdom would be established not by force but by the power of His sacrificial love. Jesus was not the kind of king that people expected Him to be, motivated by power and nationalism. Rather, He ushered in a kingdom founded upon righteousness and justice, where the humble would be lifted up and the proud brought low. Jesus paid special attention to the oppressed, the excluded, and the people experiencing poverty because His Kingdom is one where all people are welcomed. Through His death and resurrection, He brought peace to those who are far away and peace to those who are near.

Jesus embodied the height and depth of God's love in a person, demonstrated by servanthood, suffering, and sacrifice. Ultimately, He made this love accessible to us through what He accomplished on the cross. Jesus invites us to receive His amazing love poured out for us in His life and death and to follow in His footsteps: "As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35). As you study Jesus' last week, may you be moved by the passion of Jesus, transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and inspired to lead a life of sacrificial love.

JESUS APPROACHES JERUSALEM

Luke 19:28-44

Palm Sunday

[Jesus said,] “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.”

LUKE 19:42

ON THE FIRST DAY OF PASSOVER, Jesus entered Jerusalem with a price upon His head—and He did so in a manner that publicly announced His kingship. Previously, He had avoided attracting the attention of the religious rulers, but now Jesus would make a final public appeal of love to the people to receive Him as their king.

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey that had never been ridden, fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy (Zechariah 9:9), the crowd praised God: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” (Luke 19:38). But the people celebrating that day missed seeing who Jesus really is and what He came to do. Kings rode horses in wartime processions but donkeys in times of peace. The crowd expected Jesus to come as a conquering hero, freeing the Jews from the oppression of Rome, but Jesus was demonstrating that He came to His people in love and peace—to suffer and die for them.¹

As He approached Jerusalem, Jesus saw the city across the Kidron Valley and wept (Luke 19:41). While the crowd shouted, “Hosanna!” Jesus sobbed—not for the suffering He was going to face that week but for His people and the destruction their rebellion would bring.²

“If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace,” He said, “but now it is hidden from your eyes” (Luke 19:42). How He yearned for

them to know Him as the long-awaited Messiah whose Kingdom would have no end and who could bring them true *shalom* (the Hebrew word for peace, health, and wholeness). Jesus' reign would extend not only to Israel but to the ends of the earth, bringing peace to all the nations (Zechariah 9:10). As one commentary notes, "This day' . . . of peace has arrived; and the city . . ., whose very name means 'peace,' has failed to recognize it."³ At the very hour of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus' heart overflowed with sorrowful longing for His people.

According to Porterfield, this vision of peace, in which everything is as it ought to be, touches every aspect of life and can never coexist with injustice. This is the kind of peace that Jesus, the Prince of Peace, came to bring.⁵

1. Author Jason Porterfield says, "Shalom exists when all our relationships are flourishing: our relationship with God, with each other, with creation, and even with ourselves."⁴ In what areas of your life are you longing for shalom?

2. Read Luke 19:28-40. What stands out to you about this passage?

We relate to God in our pain through lament. Over one-third of the Psalms contain prayers of lament. Pastor Mark Vroegop writes, "Lament is the honest cry of a hurting heart wrestling with the paradox of pain and the promise of God's goodness."¹⁵

9. Living in the brokenness of this world, we may long for things that are not yet fulfilled. Jesus' lament gives us permission to express our grief more openly to God. What everyday sufferings or particular hardships in your own life do you need to grieve? Are there any spiritual practices that can help you express your lament to God?

Your Response

How do you think Jesus feels today when He looks at the earth? Ask Jesus to make our hearts like His, that we may notice and deeply care about the things He cares about. Share one thing that God has given you a passion for or drawn your attention to that reflects His heart. How can you use your gifts in that area?
