

Life Matters

Worksheet 6



Are you the type of person who likes to go to the Dentist? No, me neither! If your visit to the Dentist is for an emergency, then it will be because you are in pain. You know that whatever the Dentist is going to do will require an injection which will hurt. You also know that the whole procedure will at the very least be uncomfortable. After all, no-one likes holding their jaws wide open whilst a hygienist holds a miniature vacuum cleaner in your mouth and the dentist prods away with some sharp metal instruments. It's really no fun at all. So why go? We go because the temporary pain is worth it to know what will be achieved afterwards. The real pain is worth the reward (no pain) that follows.

There are so many areas in our lives where this is true. When I was a child and complained about the taste of some medicine, I was told by my parents that it 'must be doing me good as the worst it tastes, the better it is for you'! That fooled me for years.

If you ever read the biographies of sporting stars then you will often read about the hours and hours of long grueling, training that they go through for the potential future victories and glory that would follow. If we know that there is light at the end of the tunnel, then we are willing to go through that darkness to reach the end.

QUESTIONS:

- **Is there something in your life that you go through because you know the benefit for you in the end?**
- **Have you ever made sacrifices in your life for future gain?**

We have seen in our previous studies that John the Baptist announced that Jesus is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." How does Jesus achieve this? The message of the bible is that Jesus does this by going to the cross and dying for us. He dies as a substitute for other people.

In the other three gospel accounts, Mathew, Mark and Luke, we have Jesus on three occasions predicting his suffering, death and resurrection. The gospel of John is written a few years after these accounts and does not need to repeat what has already been written and recorded for us. Instead, John gives us far more details of the last supper than the other gospel writers. In that meal, Jesus is preparing his disciples for what will come next. That Jesus will suffer, die, return to them and then the Holy Spirit will be sent to them. All the gospel writers are agreed, Jesus predicted his death and told the disciples about it. The death of Jesus is part of God the Father's plan for him.

In John chapter 13, Jesus tells the disciples that he is only going to be with them a little while longer. Peter is nearly always the disciple who speaks when everyone else is silent, and the one who asks the questions that everyone else is thinking of. Peter misunderstands Jesus and thinks that he's going somewhere and asks

“Lord, where are you going?” Jesus’ answer is a little cryptic, “Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow me later.” Peter asks a follow up question with fake boldness and loyalty, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” “Then Jesus answered, ‘Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times.’” It’s a stunning response from Jesus. Jesus is telling the disciples that where he’s going is to lay down his life and predicts how many times Peter will deny his Lord and when! Jesus knows that he is going to die. Jesus knows that he will go to the cross. Jesus knows when.

QUESTIONS:

- **If Jesus knows the ‘hour of his death’, what does this tell us about him?**
- **What motivation does Jesus have for going to the cross?**

After Judas betrays Jesus, he is led away to be tried. Jesus is questioned by the High Priest. He is the top religious leader of the day who has very limited power because Jerusalem was under Roman rule. Jesus is taken to Pontius Pilate who was the Roman governor of the day. After questioning him, Pilate has no evidence that Jesus is guilty of any wrongdoing. Pilate has the opportunity to appease the Jewish leaders and to claim his innocence in his handling of Jesus. His opportunity comes via a custom where one prisoner can be released as a gesture of goodwill at Passover time. The crowds have gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover celebrations and Pilate asks the crowds who they would like to release, to free. What happens next is a great explanation of what Christianity is all about.

You would have thought that the crowd would love to have Jesus back as a free man. After all Jesus had healed their sick, made their blind to see, helped deaf people to hear and had raised at least three different people back to life. Surely the crowd would choose to free the innocent miracle worker. However, the religious leaders stirred up the crowds so that they chanted the name of Barrabas. John chapter 18, verse 40 tells us “No, not him! Give us Barrabas!” Barrabas, was a rioter who deserved to face execution under the law. He was clearly guilty of being a lawbreaker. Jesus was clearly innocent of being a lawbreaker. Yet Barrabas was set free, and Jesus was sent to die.

This is the gospel! This is great news! This is why Jesus goes to the cross. He dies so that guilty Barrabas can be set free. Jesus dies in the place of Barrabas. That is Christianity in action.

We are used to substitutes in sport. One person takes the place of another. That is what happened on the cross. Jesus goes to the cross and is punished so that we don’t have to face punishment. We are the ones who are lawbreakers when it comes to God’s law. Jesus is completely innocent of breaking God’s law. Yet Jesus is willing to go to the cross and be punished in your place. He took Barrabas’ place, and he took my place.

QUESTIONS:

- **Has Jesus, ‘taken your place’ at the cross?**
- **Do you understand why Jesus goes to the cross?**

When Jesus met with Nicodemus, the Jewish religious leader, their conversation is recorded for us by John in chapter 3. We have previously looked at aspects of this conversation. During this conversation Jesus talks about his impending death and he compares it to a strange occurrence in the history of Israel. In verse 14

Jesus says, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” Jesus is referring to an amazing event that is written for us in Numbers chapter 21.

There the Israelites were under the leadership of Moses. The Israelites were grumbling and complaining about their lives. They were sinning against Moses and against God. God punishes them by sending venomous snakes amongst the people which bit them eventually resulting in death. The people were sorry for their sin and Moses prayed for them. The Lord told Moses what to do, “make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” This may seem a bizarre instruction, but Moses made a bronze snake and put it on a pole. The people who had been bitten only needed to look at it and were healed.

We see here faith and obedience going hand in hand. You had to believe that by looking at the bronze snake you would be healed and if you did believe then you would do something about it and actually take a look. That is biblical faith. It is believing what has been written and acting upon the instructions given to us.

Jesus quotes this incident in his conversation with Nicodemus and says that he (the Son of Man) must be lifted up (on the cross rather than a pole) and that everyone who believes may have eternal life. You have life by looking to Jesus. You have eternal life by believing what John and the other bible writers say about Jesus. You believe and act upon the instructions.

QUESTIONS:

- **Do you believe that Jesus dying on the cross was for you?**
- **Have you acted upon what Jesus has said and ‘looked and lived’?**

Jesus is willing to go to the cross to give you life. There is pain and separation from God at the cross, yet Jesus willingly endures this as he looks to what comes as a result. The sacrifice is worth it for him because it means life for you!

How would you like to explore this life in Jesus Christ that John wants you to know? This is your opportunity and invitation to do that. There are currently millions of people around the world who have experienced what life in Jesus Christ is really like. Why not commit to spend some time for the next few weeks exploring this for yourself? These videos and studies will be appearing twice a week and we will attempt to answer any questions you have via our email address info@lfec.org

In the next video and study, we will be looking at what happens to Jesus after his death on the cross. Look out for these on YouTube, Facebook or on our website:

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