

A VIOLENT GRACE: COMPANION

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR EACH CHAPTER

Introduction

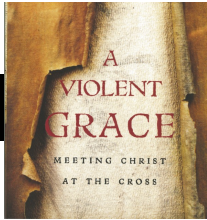
1. Why would a culture that understood the redeeming aspect of the cross and our Lord's sacrifice for sin not have any images of it?
2. Do you think that the cross has faded from view in Christian church use today? Why?
3. How do you think the cross should be used, either as an image or in speech, to proclaim the Gospel?
4. What temptations to avoid the cross have you had? What opportunities have you had in recent days to share of Christ's death?
5. When you think of Jesus' crucifixion and the cross, what comes to your mind?

Chapter One: "He was born to die so I could be born to new life"

1. What are the early signals in Jesus' birth and early childhood that forewarned that the gift of salvation would come at a precious price? Why did the Lord allow the execution of the babies at Bethlehem to happen?
2. What do you think was on Peter's mind when he told Jesus that He would never have to suffer? What "human concerns" do you think Jesus was referring to? What were the "things of God" that Jesus wanted Peter to understand?
3. Thinking about the Old Testament prophecies regarding Jesus' death, which of those is the most striking to you? Why?
4. What does realizing that Jesus knew before His incarnation of His brutal death reveal about His love for the world? For you?
5. Psalm 22 is a lament of the suffering that Messiah will endure, yet its tone changes at the end. What brings about this change? How is there hope found in the midst of sorrow?
6. How does Jesus being born to die become a foreshadowing of your own death and new life? [Romans 6:1-4] Does Jesus' suffering help you to endure your own suffering?

Chapter Two: "He suffered temptation so I can experience victory"

1. Reflect on this past weekend's worship message. What aspects connected with you?
2. Jesus says "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." Why do you think that is? Why do you think He told this to His disciples?
3. Why is the literal interpretation of Jesus sweating blood preferable to merely seeing Luke as using some poetic expression to describe Jesus sweating profusely?



A VIOLENT GRACE: COMPANION

4. Thinking about Jesus' response, "Not my will, but Thine be done". What does that example mean for you in life? What should be our response when life overwhelms us? Why?
5. Why do you think God chose to have such a powerful part of Jesus' suffering for our sin to take place in a garden?
6. How does Jesus' suffering strengthen you when tempted?

Chapter Three: "He was betrayed so I might know His faithfulness"

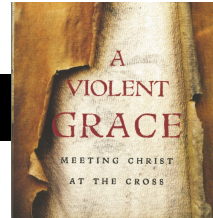
1. Reflect on Wednesday's worship message. What aspects connected with you?
2. Reflect on Judas' role as one of the Twelve. How do the Scriptures reveal what lay at the heart of Judas in his betrayal? [Matthew 26:15-16]
3. Do you think Judas was ever "on board" as a true disciple of Jesus? Why or why not?
4. Peter denied Jesus on the same night as Judas' betrayal, but what was different?
5. Why was Peter's restoration so important in Jesus' mind? How does Jesus' restoration of Peter bless the Church through Peter's ministry?
6. Is there restoration by our Lord in our lives? How does that affect you? How is His restoration of you a blessing to others?

Chapter Four: "He was arrested and bound so I could be rescued from bondage"

1. Reflect on this past weekend's worship message. What aspects connected with you?
2. What thoughts do you have knowing the number of guards that came to arrest Jesus? Do you think that number affected the disciples?
3. How do you think Jesus saw those who betrayed and arrested Him?
4. Why did everyone fall to the ground when Jesus said "I am"? What parallels might be found in Philippians 2:9-11?
5. Do you think Peter acted out of fear or strength when he cut off the servant's ear? Why?
6. How does Jesus show He is in control of the situation? What is the shocking result of this confrontation in Gethsemane?

Chapter Five: "He stood trial alone, so I might have an advocate"

1. Does Jesus reveal He is the Son of God, the chosen Messiah, in His trial? How exactly does He do that? How do we know that we are not simply putting our own theological perspective on His words?
2. Do you find irony in the fact that the Jewish leaders refuse to enter Pilate's palace, seeking to avoid being ceremonially unclean? Why?



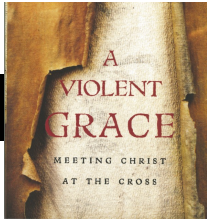
3. Why did Jesus' kingship pose no threat to Roman rule? [see John 18:36] Do you think that Pilate still felt threatened? Why or why not?
4. How does Herod contribute to the suffering of Christ? [see Luke 23:8-11]
5. Discuss the historic career of Pilate as related in "A Violent Grace." What do his actions reveal about his character as he presides over Jesus' trial?
6. During the trial, Pilate seeks to release Jesus by offering a choice between Jesus and Barabbas, a notorious murderer [read the account in Matthew 27:15-26]. Barabbas literally means "son of the father." Discuss this and what it means.
7. Pilate asks the crowd "Shall I crucify your king?" and they respond "We have no king but Caesar." [John 19:15] What are the implications of such a statement? [Psalm 47:6 & 89:18]
8. How does Jesus serve as our eternal advocate? [1 John 2:1-2]

Chapter 6: "He was wounded so I could be healed"

1. Reflect on Wednesday's worship message. What aspects connected with you?
2. Reflect on the severity of the Roman scourge. What are your thoughts on someone being able to endure such a scourge? How do you think Jesus was able to survive? Why is He subjected to such cruelty? [Isaiah 53:4-5]
3. Why couldn't Christ's suffering have been simply a mental anguish? Why did His suffering have to take such physical measures?

Chapter 7 "He endured mockery so I could know dignity and joy"

1. Reflect on this past weekend's worship message. What aspects connected with you?
2. Describe the feeling of being mocked. What does it do to the one being mocked? Why do people engage in mockery?
3. How does Jesus suffer mockery through His passion?
4. What is the ironic content of the mockery Jesus endures from the cross? How is this mockery an echo of Satan's temptation in the wilderness? [see Matthew 4:1-11]
5. As part of the jeering that occurs around the cross, the crowd passing by inaccurately reflects on a statement Jesus made early in His ministry. They taunt Him 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!" [Mt. 27:40] Why was Jesus' seeming attack on the temple such an affront to the Jews of Jesus' day? What did Jesus really say regarding the temple's destruction? What lesson was He teaching? [see John 2:12-22]
6. What does Jesus' endurance of the shame of the cross mean for us and for our witness to others?



A VIOLENT GRACE: COMPANION

Chapter 8 “He was condemned so the Truth could set me free”

1. Where do you see the value of the truth eroding away in our world?
2. Where do you find it difficult to stand for the truth in your life?
3. Discuss how Jesus’ incarnation changes everything.
4. How do people avoid the Truth about Jesus today? How do you seek to tell the Truth?

Chapter 9 “He was crowned with thorns so I might crown Him with praise”

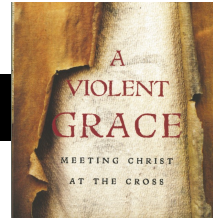
1. Reflect on Wednesday's worship message. What aspects connected with you?
2. When you think of crowns, what images or thoughts come to mind?
3. Where else in Scripture are thorns mentioned? How are those instances connected to this?
4. How does the Roman guards’ attempt to mock Jesus reveal His glory?
5. How does Paul echo this coronation in regards to his service to Christ? [II Corinthians 12:7-10] How does this equip us to serve our Lord in the midst of suffering?

Chapter Ten: “He was nailed to the cross, so I might escape Judgment”

1. Why is it significant to people to “leave their mark” in the world?
2. How has the “mark” of Jesus’ cross left its impression on you? On your community? What would the world be like without Jesus’ death on the cross?
3. What would your reaction have been if you were asked to carry Jesus’ cross?
4. Jesus said "If anyone would be my disciple, they must deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me" [Luke 9:23] Describe what it means to carry your cross versus Jesus carrying His.
5. Why does God choose such a brutal form of execution to bring about our salvation? [Gal. 3:13]
6. Why does Jesus die after only being on the cross for six hours? [John 10:17-18]
7. How does Card’s description of Jesus hanging on the cross (pages 98-99) illustrate all of humanity in relationship to the cross?

Chapter Eleven: “He was stretched out between thieves, so I could know the reach of love”

1. Reflect on Wednesday's worship message. What aspects connected with you?
2. How does the execution of the two thieves help the veracity of the account of Jesus’ death?
3. According to Michael Card, how do the thieves represent all of humanity?



4. Describe “Paradise” from your perspective.
5. What does the thief’s request of Jesus mean? How does Scripture address “remembering?”
6. How does his request influence our relationship to Christ?
7. How does Jesus’ assuring announcement empower our dealings with the condemned sinners of the world?

Chapter Twelve: “He suffered thirst, so I can drink living water”

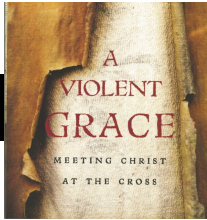
1. Reflect on this past weekend's worship message. What aspects connected with you?
2. Why does Jesus call out that He’s thirsty? [John 19:28] Why is that significant?
3. Why had Jesus refused the wine mixed with myrrh?
4. How do Card’s reflections on the woman at the well fit into this moment on the cross?
5. How was His thirst, then, the means for this woman to receive living water? How is His thirst from the cross that gift for the world, for you?

Chapter Thirteen: “He said, ‘It is finished,’ so I could begin my walk of faith”

1. Discuss what Jesus meant by the statement “It is finished.”
2. How might it relate to Psalm 22:31? (note also how that Psalm begins)
3. What does this statement from the cross mean for you? What does it mean for the work of the Church?
4. How has Jesus prepared us for our service to Him? Where does that service find its expression in your life?

Chapter Fourteen: “He was God’s chosen Lamb, slain, so I could claim His sacrifice as my own”

1. Reflect on Wednesday's worship message. What aspects connected with you?
2. What were sacrifices used for in the Old Testament? How was that different from how sacrifices were generally viewed and used in pagan religions of the same time?
3. How is Christ “the Lamb of God?”
4. Why didn’t the priests want the three bodies to remain on the crosses?
5. Why didn’t the soldiers break Jesus’ legs?
6. Card speaks of the Lamb receiving praise forever. How does that Lamb receive those praises even now?



A VIOLENT GRACE: COMPANION

Chapter Fifteen: “He was forsaken by the Father, so I would never be rejected”

1. Reflect on this past weekend's worship message. What aspects connected with you?
2. If you're comfortable sharing and have had such an experience, share a time or reflect on a time when you felt forsaken.
3. Discuss how Card describes the three hours of darkness. How does he relate it to Christ?
4. How do the plagues of Egypt and the Passover event parallel Golgatha?
5. Why does the Father forsake Jesus on the cross? [see II Corinthians 5:21]
6. How does having God's look [eyes] fixed on us give us peace?

Chapter Sixteen: “He chose the shame of weakness so I can know the hope of glory”

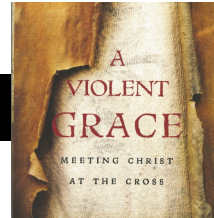
1. How do you think the onlookers felt as Jesus breathed His last that day?
2. How was Jesus' death in weakness His glory?

Chapter Seventeen: “He shed His blood, so I can be white as snow”

1. Why was blood held in such significance in the Old Testament? [Leviticus 17:11]
2. To what does Jesus seem to be referring in John 6:53? How does Communion then become a means of God's forgiveness?
3. How else does John use the image of blood in his Revelation? [see Revelation 7:9-17]

Chapter Eighteen: “His heart was pierced so mine could be made whole”

1. What thing of genuine beauty or grace has broken your heart? What issue of grief has broken your heart?
2. How is Christ's heart literally “broken” on the cross? [compare Zechariah 12:10 with John 19:34,37]
3. How does the image of Christ's heart being pierced and the issuance of blood and water poetically remind us of the sacraments and the formation of the Bride of Christ, His Church?
4. Why does John carefully report the details of Jesus' death? [John 20:31]
5. How does Christ's passion break our hearts and move us to be His passionate witnesses?



Chapter Nineteen: “He died and was buried so the grave could not hold me”

1. What personal risk is Joseph of Arimathea taking in requesting to have the body of Jesus for burial?
2. How does Card help us paint a realistic mental picture of Jesus’ removal from the cross and burial?
3. How is Jesus’ burial far different from most crucified people?
4. Among the unusual details surrounding the burial of Christ, why is it noted that no one else had ever been buried in the tomb Joseph provides?
5. What steps were taken to secure the tomb?

Chapter Twenty: “He rose again so I might experience eternal life”

1. Try to project yourself into the events that first Easter morning. How might you have felt when you thought the body of Jesus had been stolen? When you shared the sad news with His apostles? When angels appeared to you? When you stood before the risen Savior?
2. How is Mary Magdalene’s first response, as she recognizes who Jesus is, a sign that they were not married, but rather that their relationship was one of Messiah and disciple?
3. How was Jesus’ resurrection encounter with those who met Him that first Easter the start of their own resurrection...the start of the resurrection of all of Christ’s followers?
4. Discuss how Card personalizes the Resurrection on pages 171-172.
5. How does the Lord reverse the flow of violence in His Resurrection?

Chapter Twenty-one: “He is known by His scars so I will take up my cross and follow Him”

1. How does Jesus offer proof that it is really Him after His resurrection? Will these marks of recognition remain forever? [see Rev. 5:6-10]
2. Why do you think Jesus keeps the scars in His flesh after His resurrection?
3. How does Jesus lead us to our own “crucifixion?” What are the identifying marks of our life as a follower of Christ?
4. Following in the Lord’s steps of servanthood, what does your resurrected life look like to you? What does your resurrected life look like to your neighbor?
5. How is the cross of Christ both a mirror to show your sin and a window into God’s amazing love for you?



Worship Celebration Schedule

Traditional Praise: Sundays @ 8:00 AM | 9:30 AM | 11:00 AM

Modern Praise: Saturdays @ 5:00 PM | Sundays @ 11:00 AM

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