



Week 1 Small Group: Shadows: Glimpse of a Sacrifice!

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, as we journey through this Lenten season, we pray that we see you more clearly and trust you more dearly. Open our eyes and heart to the message of the Scripture and the truth of Jesus' work on our behalf. AMEN.

STAYING CONNECTED TO LENT:

Since we are in the season of Lent, each group session will begin with a reading of a portion of the Passion History from the Gospel of Mark. The purpose is to use the season of Lent to journey with Jesus to the cross and the empty tomb. A few questions follow for a little discussion on this lesson (while not intended to take the whole session).

Mark 14:1-26 Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. ² "But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot."

³ While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

⁴ Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? ⁵ It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.

⁶ "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. ⁹ I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. ¹¹ They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

The Lord's Supper

¹² On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

¹³ So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. ¹⁴ Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest

room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹⁵ He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

¹⁶ The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

¹⁷ When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. ¹⁸ While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."

¹⁹ They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?"

²⁰ "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. ²¹ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

²² While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

²³ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

²⁴ "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. ²⁵ "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."

²⁶ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Questions for reflection:

Our series, "Shadows," reveals glimpses of Jesus from the Old Testament. As you reflect on this portion of Mark's account, the setting is the celebration of the Passover. The event (Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread) is recorded in Exodus 12 (reread if you'd like). Why do you think Jesus chose the setting of the Passover and the Passover meal to meet with his disciples and give us what we now know and love as the Lord's Supper?

BREAKING THE ICE:

This series is based on Colossians 2:16-17, **"Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."** Throughout the Old Testament, there are glimpses of who Jesus would be and what he would do.

- a. When you see a shadow, what can you learn from the shadow? What remains a mystery?
- b. Sometimes the Old Testament comes across as intimidating and challenging. Has this been true for you? Why or why not? Does realizing that a key purpose of the Old Testament is to give glimpses and pictures of Jesus help? How so? (Maybe it doesn't...so hopefully this series will help! 😊)

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD: Passing God's Tests by Trusting his Promises!

Read Genesis 22:1-2

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

1. If you are Abraham, what is your reaction to being tested in this way? What thoughts would be going through your mind?
2. Many of the tests that God allows to come in our lives challenge our faith to "walk by faith not by sight" or "Love the Lord above all else." When has God allowed a test of either or both of these to come into your life? Share as much as you are comfortable.
3. We always love when we have the questions that will be on the test AND the correct answers. While God doesn't promise to give either (the question or the specific answer), he does provide us with tools to pass the test that come to our faith. What did God give to Abraham to pass this test? What does he give to us? *(See 1 Corinthians 10:11-13: **These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. 12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.)***

Read Hebrews 10:11-12, 17-19

By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. ...

17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

4. Hebrews 11 is often listed as the "Hall of Faith" chapter in the Bible. It lists many well-known (and some not so well-known) individuals that "walked by faith." In your own words, what does it mean to you to "walk by faith"?
5. Consider the key opportunities God gave Abraham to "walk by faith." He was called to leave his homeland and go to a country he was not familiar with. He was told he would be the father of countless descendants, yet did not have a son. He was told he was going to have a son at 99 years old, and did. He was told to sacrifice that son, and God spared his life.
 - a. Does walking by faith get easier "with experience"? Explain.
 - b. What makes it challenging to walk by faith in God's promises instead of living by what we know and see? (Share an example from your life if you'd like.)

6. Abraham reconciled God's directive, "Sacrifice Isaac" with God's promise "Isaac is the son of the promise" with the trust, "God can raise the dead." The gap between my perception and God's promises is God's power. Can you think of biblical examples where God filled a gap between a human perception of the events and his promises with a display of his power? Can you think of an event in your life?

Read Genesis 22:13-14

13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

Read Isaiah 53:4-7

- 4 **Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.**
- 5 **But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.**
- 6 **We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.**
- 7 **He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.**

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21

21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

7. "Instead of" = a Substitute. The ram was a substitute for Isaac and a shadow of Christ who would be our substitute. A substitute is sent into a game when the player is not able to finish or continue their work. As you read these passages, describe the substitution that God made for us by sending Jesus.
8. What blessings do we enjoy now and in the future because Jesus was willing to be our substitute?

NEXT STEPS:

1. Journal (or discussion) questions:
 - a. Reflect on the concept of a "substitute." What insights about Jesus' work for you does God reveal to you?
 - b. Where is God testing you to walk by faith? Where do God's promises take you in that struggle?

CLOSING PRAYER: (Invite all participates to share a prayer)

God of all power and every promise, lead me to have the faith of Abraham to follow your direction, even when it challenges my perception. Cause me to trust you in all things, especially trusting the fact that Jesus is my substitute and carried my sin to the cross and paid for it there so I could be declared perfect and live with you forever, AMEN.