



DISCUSSION
GUIDE

SESSION 1

IDENTITY

Like a lens, the cross helps us to look at some huge questions we struggle to make sense of in life. Throughout these session we will be looking at snippets from Jesus' journey to the cross, reinforced by other Scriptures to open up a window onto our journey of following Jesus as we take up our own cross and follow him.

Who am I? Beneath what you do, who your family is, what you wear or do or eat ... Who are you, really? The cross and what it represents — Easter and the approach to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection — serves as a lens that brings focus to the big questions of life — the seen and unseen wrestlings of all our lives. What does it show us about who we truly are?

Our first look is at a man name Simon. Simon is identified as the man who carried the cross. Can the cross help us discover how to live in this new identity?

CONVERSATION STARTER

- If you could live in any other era, what time period would that be? Why?

DIGGING DEEPER

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

Together, open your Bibles and read from **Mark 15:21; Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:3-8; & Colossians 3:1-14** then watch Session 1.

SESSION 2

AMBITION

Jesus continually looks away from himself towards others on his way to the cross. With humility as a Christian virtue, just what might Christian ambition look like? Can the cross help us discover an ambition that is others focused the way Jesus was?

Ambition is what drives us forward. Where do you see yourself in five years? How will you get yourself there? What's your endgame? Goals are great, and ambition can give us focus ... But what does ambition look like through the lens of the cross? What can we learn from all Jesus accomplished on the cross and throughout His journey toward it?

CONVERSATION STARTER

- In your childhood, what were you most ambitious about succeeding in? What did childhood ambition look like for you?

DIGGING DEEPER

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

Together, open your Bibles and read from **Luke 23:27-43**; **Philippians 2:3-11** then watch Session 2.

- Can you be ambitious and follow Jesus?

Godly ambition will never require you to compromise godly values.

SESSION 3

FAILURE

When was the last time you failed at something? Who did you tell? Often our instinct is to hide our failures ... to believe that failure is fatal. After all, the news is full of failures of the most public kind. Yet failure is, in some measure, part of life ... If we're not failing, we're not learning. So how do we frame failure in a way that's not so much a dead end as a launch pad?

Peter suffers a catastrophic failure when it counted most but it was not the end of his story. Can failure ever become our teacher? Can the cross help us to overcome failure?

CONVERSATION STARTER

- Is there anything that you are afraid of?

DIGGING DEEPER

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

Together, open your Bibles and read from **Mark 14:66-72; John 21:15-19; Acts 2:14-21** then watch Session 3.

- How do you generally deal with failure in your life?

Picture yourself as Peter . . .

What emotions or feelings come to mind? What are you thinking about? Why do you think Peter denied Christ? How do you relate to Peter?

- What "rooster" reminds you of failure and guilt? How did you get through?

- What does the story about Peter tell you about human nature? What would you have done if you were questioned in the courtyard?

As followers of Jesus we are to stand out from others. Peter was one of the most prominent of Jesus' disciples, yet he was still a sinner in in of God's mercy and forgiveness.

- When, if ever, have you felt your failures had made it impossible for God to use you again?
- Why are Christians sometimes afraid or reluctant to identify themselves as believers in Christ? What sorts of situations make you uncomfortable or fearful about identifying with Christianity?
- What warnings and encouragement can you draw from Peter's experience?
- How do these verses apply to your life? What will you do about it?

PRAISE & PRAYER POINTS

Spend some time praying for each other's prayer requests and share what God is doing in your life.

SESSION 4

EVIL

Atonement ... Restitution ... Making amends. Our sense of justice resonates with these words ... Each of us needs to own our consequences, the penalties for our choices. So in the light of the gap between our imperfection — our selfishness, our weakness, our humanness — and God's perfection, how do we make amends? How can we even begin to?

One thing is clear, atonement needs to be made for sin. Even a secular society can grasp at the straws of that reality. But we often feel people need to do that for themselves. How can Jesus be the representative for all of us? What does it mean to say Jesus is our atoning sacrifice? How does he overcome evil on our behalf? Can the cross help us see our plight in a new way?

CONVERSATION STARTER

- When was the last time you were nervous or fearful the night before a big event or upcoming challenge? Describe what it was and how you felt?

DIGGING DEEPER

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

Together, open your Bibles and read from **Mark 15:33-39; 1 Corinthians 15:3** then watch Session 4.

- When did the meaning of the death of Christ begin to make sense for you? How would you explain this to a non-Christian friend?

SESSION 5

LIFE

The cross ... an inescapable symbol of Easter and the approach to Jesus' sacrificial death ... and a lens that brings focus to the big questions of life — the seen and unseen wrestlings of our individual lives. What does the victory of the resurrected Jesus mean for our daily lives? Our nitty-gritty, messy, complicated, often painful lives? He is risen ... Now what?

We celebrate the reality that Jesus is alive. But we also live in the reality that we will all die one day. We are all mortal. But we are literally dying to rise! Because of Jesus we too shall live! There is a path to life eternal. The cross helps us to see the way.

CONVERSATION STARTER

- What was the most incredible event you've ever witnessed?

DIGGING DEEPER

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

Together, open your Bibles and read from **John 20:1; 2 Corinthians 4:5-18** then watch Session 5.

- How do you think Mary was feeling after Jesus' death? What do you think motivated her to go to the tomb?
- How has Jesus spoken your name in a time of grief or trouble? What effect did it have on you?
- Has your life been more like the darkness of Good Friday or the joy of Easter, or somewhere in between?
- Why is the resurrection of Christ vital to Christianity?



first alliance church