

BIBLE STUDY HELPS

TITLE: If It Dies (Dying to Produce Life)

TEXT: John 12:20-33

TARGET: SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Jesus offers life to those who seek Him.

LOOK UP: FOCUSING THE GROUP

Introduce: It's spring, which means people are getting ready to plant gardens.

- If you are planting, or if you were to plant a garden, what kinds of seeds would you want to plant?
- Have you ever considered what it takes for those seeds to produce life?
- Unless the seed "dies" it can't take root or produce. In essence, the seed sacrifices its life in order to produce the vegetables we enjoy.

Death and life are intertwined in all of God's creation. We see this played out daily in many ways. While, from a human perspective, death isn't something pleasant to consider, it is out of death that life continues for so many things. This is equally true for our life in Christ. No one can have life in Christ without His sacrificial death. This session will focus on Jesus once again, sharing about His impending death so that He could provide eternal life to those who would believe in and follow Him.

Before we examine the key passages, let's examine what took place leading up to Jesus, once again, discussing His impending death.

Context: This conversation about death takes place right after Jesus' triumphal entry in Jerusalem on the days leading up to His trial, death, and resurrection. John 12:12-19 describes this exciting moment:

*¹² The next day, when the large crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ they took palm branches and went out to meet him. They kept shouting: "**Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!**" ¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written: ¹⁵ **Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion. Look, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.***

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first. However, when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.

¹⁷ Meanwhile, the crowd, which had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify. ¹⁸ This is also why the crowd met him, because they heard he had done this sign. ¹⁹ Then the Pharisees said to one another, "You see? You've accomplished nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!"

Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem drew the attention of the entire city. If you recall, this was the time of the Passover festival so people from all regions were in Jerusalem, including some Greeks. They observed Jesus' entry and desired to "see Jesus" because of what they had heard about restoring the life of Lazarus. They desired to know more about this man who gave life to the dead.

LOOK IN: UNPACKING THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Seeking Jesus – John 12:20-22

²⁰ Now some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the festival. ²¹ So they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, "Sir, we want to see Jesus." ²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

The Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the observance of the Passover sought out Jesus because of what they had heard about Him, especially regarding the raising of Lazarus.

Ask: What might cause people to seek Jesus today?

We don't know why they came to Philip, nor why Philip went and told Andrew. It's interesting how John describes the process – The Greeks go to Philip; Philip goes to Andrew; they both go and tell Jesus! One must wonder why Philip didn't just take the group directly to Jesus. What we do know is that the Greeks desired to “see Jesus.” This is what's important.

Discuss: Would you be surprised if someone asked you to introduce them to Jesus? How can you be more approachable so people would be willing to ask you about Jesus?

We all have those moments when someone approaches us and desires to “see Jesus.” These are sometimes called divine appointments. When these take place, we should be ready to either help them “see Jesus” or take them to someone who can help them “see Jesus.”

Next John describes Jesus' response.

Death Brings Life—John 12:23-26

²³ Jesus replied to them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” ²⁴ Truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.” ²⁵ “The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” ²⁶ If anyone serves me, he must follow me. Where I am, there my servant also will be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”

It's not clear who are the “them” to whom Jesus is responding. Is it Philip and Andrew, the Greeks, or the crowd? While this isn't clear, Jesus' message is very clear. Jesus was preparing for His death, and by using His own life as an example, Jesus told them that the hour had come for the “Son of Man to be glorified.” He uses an agricultural analogy that all could understand. Jesus compared His death to a grain of wheat that must fall into the soil and perish. Only after it perished could it produce “much fruit.” New life can only be produced from a kernel that dies in the ground. Jesus knew His obedience to the Father would cost Him everything. He knew He would soon die on a cross. Yet He also knew that His death would “produce much fruit” by providing a way for all who believed to be born again and receive eternal life.

Then the Lord passed this principle to His disciples: “*The one who loves his life will lose it.*”

Discuss: What evidence demonstrates that one loves their life more than following Jesus? What is wrong with loving your life?

We cannot “love” our lives and still expect to follow Christ. The Explore the Bible Leader Commentary describes what Jesus was saying this way: “Jesus wanted the disciples to understand a vital spiritual truth. If a person *loves his life*, he will *lose it*. This phrase describes people caring more about their earthly life, including worldly pleasures, than about serving God. Such individuals will inevitably forfeit their earthly and spiritual lives.”

Jesus went on to say that “*the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*”

Discuss:

- How does one hate his life? What does this look like? Is this referring to desiring to physically die? (No)
- What does the phrase “*in this world*” tell us about what Jesus meant by saying one must “hate his life”?
- What did Jesus say was the outcome of hating one's life? (Eternal life)
- Why is it difficult to hate one's life in this world? (In PSG, p. 24)

Jesus points to hating the curse of sin that one must continually deal with. It points to the impact of sin on one's life and the world in general. If one hates this kind of life, what should one do? If you hate something in this world you have choices – isolate or serve. In Christ we are to serve.

The Explore the Bible leader commentary summarizes it this way: “People have the option to serve Christ or not, but serving Jesus carries both a requirement (“*follow me*”) and a **reward** (the Father's *honor*). Believers also receive a second reward: Jesus said they would live *where I am*. To be present with the Master is the greatest blessing imaginable.”

Assign: Notice how the following verses help us understand what Jesus was saying about this principle for those who desire to follow Him. Someone read the following verses: John 11:25–26; 1 John 5:11–12; Romans 5:21; Hebrews 5:9; 9:12

Facing Death Physically and Spiritually is Difficult—John 12:27-28

²⁷ “Now my soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour.” ²⁸ “Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

Jesus publicly expressed that His soul was troubled. He publicly walked through affirming that He knew this was why He came. He publicly asked that God’s name be glorified through His obedience. He didn’t ask for strength, peace, or comfort but that the Father’s name be glorified. Then, God publicly affirmed Jesus.

Ask: What does this communicate to you about what we should seek from God when we have a troubled soul? In what ways might God or has God affirmed you when your soul was troubled, and you refocused on doing His will?

This very public conversation had a purpose though. It wasn’t for Jesus but for those who were listening. John 12:29-30 reveals the purpose: ²⁹ “The crowd standing there heard it and said it was thunder. Others said, ‘An angel has spoken to him.’” ³⁰ Jesus responded, “This voice came, not for me, but for you.”

This very public response from God was for the crowd. Jesus never sought the Father’s verbal approval because He and the Father were One. Like Jesus’ prayer at Lazarus’ tomb, this manifestation was for the people who heard it. They had trouble comprehending what took place, yet they knew that something supernatural had occurred.

Then Jesus speaks boldly regarding what was about to take place in verse 31: “Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out.”

It was time for boldness. Jesus knew that His death would produce eternal life for those who would repent of their sins and confess Him as Savior. Jesus declared that the judgment of this world would come when people would have to choose whether to follow Him or reject Him—this was the dividing line of faith. Jesus’ death and resurrection established the basis for judgment.

Additionally, judgment would fall on the ruler of this world. The original sinner, Satan, was judged along with the world system he controlled. We know that Satan being cast out was not immediate. But, with the death and resurrection of Jesus, his defeat and judgment were assured.

Finally, Jesus makes a beautiful statement in verses 32-33: “As for me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate what kind of death he was about to die.”

Jesus saw the cross just a few days away. He understood the hour had come to fulfill His mission and to provide the sacrificial atonement so people might be saved through faith in Him.

LOOK OUT: LIVING OUT THE TARGET

Display Option: Display the image on the last page.

Direct: As you examine this image, imagine that you are one of the individuals at the foot of cross. Consider everything Jesus said would take place if He were lifted up.

Consider what Jesus did for you as you listen to this quote from the ETB Leader Commentary: “Jesus draws those who seek Him to the cross. He draws their eyes upward to see His nail-pierced hands and feet, along with the horrible results of scourging upon His body. He draws their conscience inward so they can understand why the enormity of sin made the death of God’s Son necessary. He draws their hearts outward to repent, believe, and receive Him as Lord and Savior.”

Respond: When you consider what Christ did for you, how should you respond? How should this motivate you to avoid loving this world more than loving life in Christ?

FAITH EVANGELISM IMAGE

