

TORN IN TWO

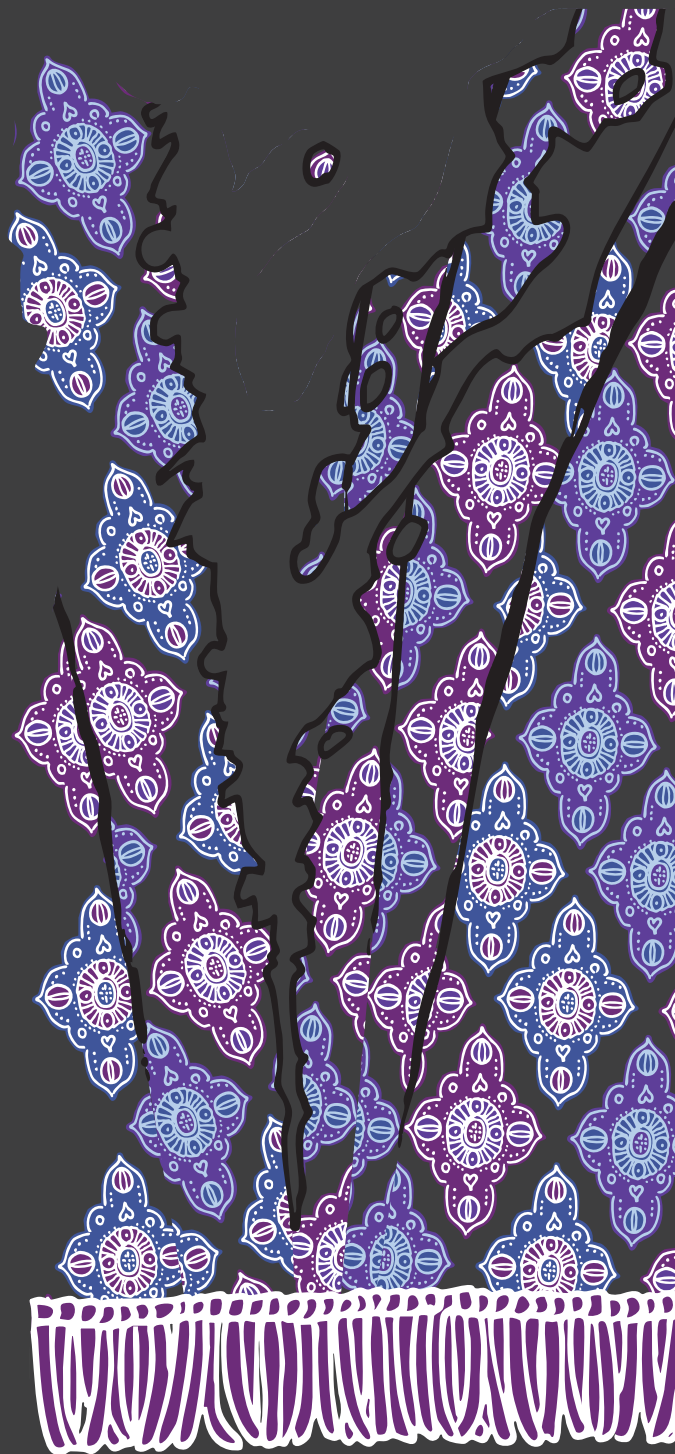
MAIN POINT.

We can draw near to God because of Jesus's sacrifice.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Before Christ's sacrifice, a heavy curtain hung in the temple, separating people from the holy of holies and protecting them from God's holy presence. At the time of Jesus's death, the curtain tore, representing unhindered access to the Father.



UNHINDERED ACCESS TO GOD

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Matthew 27–28

JESUS'S DEATH CHANGED EVERYTHING

MATTHEW 27:45-54

45 From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the whole land. 46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?" that is, "**My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**"

47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling for Elijah."

48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and offered him a drink. 49 But the rest said, "Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

50 But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit. 51 Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs were also opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. 53 And they came out of the tombs after his resurrection, entered the holy city, and appeared to many. 54 When the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

JESUS'S DEATH WAS TEMPORARY

MATTHEW 28:1-7

1 After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb. 2 There was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. 4 The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they became like dead men. 5 The angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there.' Listen, I have told you."

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

We can draw near to God because of Jesus's sacrifice.

Leaders: May the reality of Christ's death and resurrection frame everything you say and do.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

JESUS'S DEATH CHANGED EVERYTHING

MATTHEW 27:45-46

"Jesus's physical anguish was very real and His suffering was intense. . . Jesus's cry on the cross was also a cry of spiritual anguish. Jesus experienced the wrath of God, and not just for a moment, but for hours. Shrouded by darkness and seared with pain, He experienced the cup of God's wrath. . . . God's presence was real at the cross, but it was His presence in judgment and wrath toward sin."

David Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David Platt, and Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 352.

MATTHEW 27:45

"When Jesus cited the opening words of Psalm 22, he employed a tradition of the time that identified the entire passage, like quoting a chapter heading or book title. Jesus's cry, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' was analogous to a preacher today saying, 'Remember the words of Psalm 22.'"

"Why does the psalmist ask, 'Why have you forsaken me' (Psalm 22:1)?" Got Questions Ministries, accessed February 27, 2025, <https://www.gotquestions.org/why-have-you-forsaken-me.html>.

JESUS'S DEATH WAS TEMPORARY

MATTHEW 28:1-7

"Without this reversal of the ignominy of the cross, Jesus's death would have atoned for nothing. The resurrection demonstrates Christ's vindication by God, who reestablishes him in heaven as Lord of the cosmos. It is the most spectacular of all the biblical miracles and from a human perspective the most incredible of Christianity's claims. If it is false, Christians are of all people most to be pitied (1 Cor. 15:19). If it is true, it guarantees the coming bodily resurrection of all believers (1 Cor. 15:20-28; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; 1 John 3:1-3)."

Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 425-426.



CONTEXT

A central image in today's passage is the temple veil, a thick and heavy curtain, which separated the area where God's presence dwelled from the rest of the temple. We must look back to the Old Testament to understand the significance of this moment in the biblical narrative. Only on the Day of Atonement could the high priest pass through this curtain to make a sin offering for the people, and even then, a cloud covered the mercy seat, where God's presence dwelled, to spare him from death. The veil for the tabernacle, and later for the temple, was woven with fine linen and yarns of blue, purple, and scarlet hues (Ex. 26:31; 2 Chron. 3:14). These colors were painstakingly produced from the glands of thousands of snails. The color itself was precious—costly—and it pointed to the precious and costly blood of Christ. When the curtain ripped, it signified the tearing of a barrier between God and people. But it could also represent grief. In ancient eastern culture, people often ripped their clothing as an expression of sorrow and loss, and many scholars believe that when the hand of God ripped the heavy curtain from top to bottom, He may have been expressing His own grief over His Son's death and over sin's effects on humanity. The tearing of our Messiah's body and of this curtain ushered in a new covenant: God would dwell with us in a very different way.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

Christ as Reconciliation

Ever since the fall of the first man and woman in the garden of Eden, God and human beings have been estranged. Sin resulted not only in an estranged relationship with God but also in enmity between God and humanity. Sin is an infinite offense against an infinite God. Thankfully, God loves His enemies and has sent Christ to be the reconciler between us and God. Through Christ's death, God provides for our broken relationship to be restored and renewed (Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:18-19).

LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, WE AREN'T WORTHY ENOUGH ON OUR OWN TO COME INTO YOUR PRESENCE. OUR SIN SEPARATES US FROM YOU, BUT BECAUSE OF THE GIFT OF YOUR SON, WE HAVE UNHINDERED ACCESS TO YOUR PRESENCE. HELP US NEVER TO TAKE THIS GIFT FOR GRANTED, AND HELP US TO REMEMBER YOU'RE STILL AS HOLY AS YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN.



KICK STARTER

DID YOU KNOW?

Ancient cultures didn't have access to chemical dyes like us. Instead, they pulled **colors from natural sources**, like from the glands of snails, crushed worms, shellfish, and pulverized flowers and plants!

"Dye, Dyeing." Encyclopedia of the Bible—Bible Gateway. Accessed February 27, 2025. <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Dye-Dyeing>.

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

UNLIMITED ACCESS

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU HAD TOTAL, UNRESTRICTED ACCESS TO YOUR FAVORITE THEME PARK? WOULD YOU RIDE EVERY RIDE AS MANY TIMES AS YOU WANT?**
- **WHAT ABOUT THE RESTAURANTS THERE—WHAT WOULD YOU EAT? WOULD YOU PLACE LIMITS ON YOURSELF?**
- **WOULD YOU BE KIND AND LET OTHERS USE THE PRIVILEGE AS WELL OR USE IT ALL FOR YOURSELF?**

Many of us would love to have total access—to theme parks, to movie theaters, to our favorite stores, to people. But with access comes responsibility too. Having unhindered access can lead to major issues, like getting sick from riding the same roller coaster over and over! Jesus's death gives us access to Father; we can approach the throne boldly, but we're called to do so with clean hearts (Heb. 10:19-22). God is still holy, and with access to Him comes the immense responsibility of honoring Him with the way we live our lives and with the way we approach Him.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever thought about how some things must be broken in order to fulfill their purpose? Think about a glow stick; if it's going to glow, then it must be broken. Consider a pencil; if you're going to get any use out of it, it must be sharpened and shaved down. Scripture echoes this idea too. Jesus explained that if a seed is going to produce anything, then it must be planted deep down in the dirt to break apart and die (John 12:24). He said this to illustrate how His own body would be broken and crushed; He would suffer death to fulfill His purpose of giving us life. Here's the deal though: God calls us to die to our selfish and sinful desires (Rom. 6:11). When we do, we find real, abundant life (Rom. 8:13). We walk in our purpose when we allow the Lord to make us new creations. We're transformed only in the breaking of who we once were before knowing Christ as our Savior. Let Him break you of old, sinful ways, and watch as He brings new growth.

DISCUSSION



MAIN POINT.

We can draw near to God because of Jesus's sacrifice.

JESUS'S DEATH CHANGED EVERYTHING

READ MATTHEW 27:45-54

WHAT DOES DARKNESS NORMALLY SYMBOLIZE? WHAT COULD IT MEAN IN THIS PASSAGE?

Some people have called the day of Jesus's death the darkest day in history. Darkness usually symbolizes a few things: sin, evil, and death. And in a sense, all of these were present on the day of Jesus's crucifixion—so much so that creation supernaturally reflected the significance of Christ's death. **Jesus bore the wrath for our sin; He shouldered the evil of humanity; He experienced physical death. And complete darkness engulfed the whole land. It brings a whole new meaning to "a light shining in the darkness" (Isa. 9:2). Jesus, even in utter darkness, lit the way to our salvation.**

READ PSALM 22. WHY MIGHT JESUS QUOTE THIS PSALM?

Leaders: Explain that chapter/verse references didn't exist, speakers in this time often quoted opening lines of a text to help listeners recall its entirety; many listeners would've had this psalm memorized. When Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1, He expressed physical and spiritual pain as He endured God's wrath for the sins of all of humanity—past, present, and future. **But Jesus quoted David's words to point to the whole context of Psalm 22. While His suffering was required, Jesus trusted the Father that victory was coming (22:25-31). Jesus revealed Himself as the One David's words pointed to all along. Even in His agony, Christ spoke hopeful truth: This wasn't the end.**

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE *TEARING* OF THE TEMPLE CURTAIN MEANT? WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR US?

Leaders: Share context about the temple curtain. The fall in Eden instituted a barrier between God and humanity. The tabernacle in the wilderness—and later the temple in Jerusalem—featured a thick, heavy curtain separating the holiest place, where God's presence dwelled, from the rest of the temple. No one had access, except for the high priest on the Day of Atonement. **Passing through this curtain and entering God's holy presence was deadly without the protection of sacrificial blood. But God's hand supernaturally ripped the barrier between Himself and humans on the day of Jesus's death. Jesus called Himself the way (John 14:6). His own body was the way—torn for our sin, our only access to the Father (Heb. 10:19-20).** Another significant truth about the curtain tearing was the connection to the way ancient cultures expressed grief by ripping cloth. The act of God's hands tearing the curtain may have expressed His own grief over His Son's death and over sin's effect on His creation. **The torn curtain was costly; it was at the expense of Jesus's body. The ripping was both metaphorical and physical.** Jesus's sacrifice rendered the curtain unnecessary, reconciling us to the Father! Praise God!

JESUS'S DEATH WAS TEMPORARY

READ MATTHEW 28:1-7



WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU USE TO BE AMAZED BY BUT NO LONGER ARE? WHY DO WE LOSE AWE AND WONDER OVER THE RESURRECTION?

Maybe you once felt awe over your first snowfall or seeing the ocean for the first time, but those things eventually became common. The women visiting Jesus's tomb expected to mourn, but instead, they found an angel of the Lord and an empty grave! Even though Jesus taught that He would be raised from death, they were stunned by what they saw. Somehow, many of us have lost the awe and wonder of this miracle. **Never before had someone been resurrected with a new body. Other examples, like Lazarus, had simply returned to their old bodies, only to die again someday. But Jesus's resurrected body would never experience death again, and neither will ours!** Losing the awe and wonder of this truth and allowing it to become common is forgetting the miraculous gift that Christ offered us through His death: His victory is ours too!



WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO RISE FROM THE DEAD? WHAT IF HE HADN'T?

If Christ didn't defeat death and sin, then He wouldn't be who He claimed to be; He would be a liar and a fraud. **Jesus prophesied that He would suffer, die, and be raised back to life after three days (Mark 8:31). These weren't empty words!** The Old Testament pointed to a coming Savior who would take away our sin. If Christ's death was final, then ours would be too, leaving us without hope (1 Cor. 15:17). Jesus spoke truth, and His resurrection proves we can trust Him.



HOW SHOULD BELIEVING IN CHRIST'S RESURRECTION TRANSFORM OUR DAILY LIVES?

Death is a reality for us; if it wasn't, we'd be trapped in a sinful state forever. Though our current physical bodies won't last forever, death ushers us into eternity with God, where we'll experience life the way God intended us to—in unbroken relationship with Him and in perfect wholeness. The sin and darkness we experience here is temporary. As believers, the worst we could experience here is as bad as it will ever get. Because Christ rose, we will too. **This shouldn't just impact our eternity; it should transform us here—now! It should change the way we live each day, like beacons of hope and joy, even when we face unfathomable grief or loss or persecution because it's all temporary.**

WRAP-UP



WHAT RESPONSIBILITY COMES WITH BELIEVING IN THE RESURRECTION (MATT. 28:7)? WHY DON'T WE CARRY IT OUT?

Many of us have probably heard that with great knowledge comes great responsibility; in other words, we're responsible for what we know. We can't unknow it, if that makes sense! And this is absolutely true when it comes to our belief in Jesus's death and resurrection. The women who witnessed the empty tomb were immediately held responsible. The angel of the Lord commanded them to go and tell the other disciples. Did they feel afraid? Probably—especially since the angel told them not to fear (v. 5). Could they have possibly feared how the others would react to their news? Of course! In this culture, a woman's testimony wasn't taken as seriously as a man's testimony. But these women couldn't deny what they'd seen. They had to be obedient. They were responsible. **We're responsible in the same way. We're commanded to go and tell others about the miracle of our risen Savior! We're held accountable for this wonderful truth, and we're called to share it with the world.**