A five-part Lent study for individuals and small groups

by Marjorie Austin
5 The crucifixion

Icebreaker
While you play some quiet music...

Either
Look at a copy of the painting of Christ of St John of the Cross, the well-known 1951 painting by Salvador Dali. There are numerous websites where you can see this. Alternatively, it's featured in many art reference books available from the library. It shows Christ lifted on the cross in a darkened sky.

Or
Ask the group to close their eyes while you read this short meditation slowly and with pauses.

- Picture a door in the distance.
- At first it appears closed.
- But, as you approach it, you can see that it is open.
- Light now streams from the open doorway.
- Jesus is there, holding the door open for you.
- He has been waiting for you.
- He is welcoming you.
- You can walk through that door with Jesus and be in the presence of God.
- Yes, God's love, his light, his righteousness, his holiness are too great for you to bear.
- But you are with Jesus. You are safe.

Read Matthew 26:17–30

Q Jesus celebrates the Passover – the meal which remembers and celebrates the deliverance of God’s people from oppression and slavery to freedom. What new interpretation does Jesus give to the Passover feast?
Read Matthew 26:36–46

Q What is your understanding, in this highly charged and emotional scene, of why Jesus is ‘overwhelmed with sorrow’. What is the ‘cup’ he is preparing to drink?

Q How much understanding are the disciples demonstrating?

Q In his book God Came Near (Kingsway, 1989) Max Lucado writes, ‘In Gethsemane, Jesus won the battle, because He would rather go to hell for me, than go to heaven without me.’ What battle was won at Gethsemane?

For reflection

From this point on in his earthly life, Jesus takes no initiative. He becomes entirely passive and suffers what is done to him without fight and with very little response. The Lamb is bound and silent.

Read Luke 23:32–43

Q How do you explain Jesus’ prayer from the cross (verse 34)?

Q The criminal recognises Jesus’ innocence and his kingly status (verses 40–42). How do you feel about the assurance he receives from Jesus?
Read Matthew 27:45,46

Q Though he himself was without sin, Jesus experienced separation from God. What caused that separation?

Read Mark 15:38,39

Q The New Covenant is now in place! What was the significance of the torn curtain? What is its continuing significance for us today?

Read Revelation 5:1–14

Q What is going on in heaven at this moment described by John?

Q Why does John weep (verse 4)? And why is his weeping halted?

In closing

Q If you have completed the FROM THE RAM TO THE LAMB study, what has been most meaningful to you? Share it with the group.

Spend some time praising God for all that he accomplished on the cross – for you, for others. Pray for those you know and love who have yet to understand the Good News – that the ram of sacrifice is no longer needed now that the Lamb of God has come and laid down his life for us all.