



## Week 4: Jesus, Our Eternal Hope

### FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

**Regarding COVID:** While stress from the COVID-19 pandemic is still high, be sure to check in with group members with what has come to be known as **CPR** (Care, Prayer, Remember):

- **Care** refers to loving and supporting each other, from helping one another with tangible needs, rejoicing in celebrations together, and supporting personal struggles with encouragement and empathy
- **Prayer** refers to bringing our worries and needs before God and depending on him for the answers as we pray for each other, our community, and the world
- **Remember** refers to reflecting on God for who He is, what He has done in our lives, and what He is capable of doing

For more resources on care and prayer, check out the Slack channels.

### Using the Discussion Questions:

- ✓ Start your group discussion with the "Check-in" question to help your members reflect back on their week and follow up on last week's application challenge.
- ✓ Review the "Big Idea" to help you gain clarity around the heart of this week's message.
- ✓ Read this week's scripture passages together and guide your group through the "Discuss" questions to initiate meaningful dialogue around key concepts or insights from this week's message.
- ✓ Move your group discussion to a deeper level by leading them through questions in "Apply". Use discernment to customize these application questions to meet the needs & dynamics of your group.

**NOTE:** You do not have to cover all the "Discuss" or "Apply" questions.

- ✓ Connect with God together as a group through this week's "prayer practice", which can be in the form of a prayer exercise or some guidance on what to pray for in relation to the message or application.

<b>CHECK-IN</b>	What stood out for you during this past Easter weekend experience - <i>the worship, teaching, communion, campaign video, spoken word</i> ?
<b>BIG IDEA</b>	Jesus as the person of hope endured a costly experience of suffering and death to provide us with forgiveness, presence and hope. He paid the price to offer us the free gift of salvation. While salvation is free, there is a cost for us to follow him. In considering our cost to follow him, we must also consider the cost of blessing our community with the gift of love that we have so freely received.

<p><b>DISCUSS</b></p>	<p><b>Read Luke 23:44-49 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-21</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pastor Brian likes to say that in any sermon there are "aha moments", "amen moments", and possibly even "ahem moments". <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Aha moment" is a moment of enlightenment</li> <li>"Amen moment" is a resonation of something you appreciate as true and worth affirming</li> <li>"Ahem moment" is when you experience a shift in perspective</li> </ul> <p>All of these are valid responses to the weekend experience. Which of these responses kicked in for you?</p> </li> <li>Can you recall a time when you experienced a sense of loss, hopelessness, or even despair, similar to what Jesus' followers experienced during his crucifixion? How did you get through that period?</li> <li>If someone were to ask you, "Why do Christians call it Good Friday if that was the day Jesus died", how would you respond?</li> </ol>
<p><b>APPLY</b> How do we respond to God's teaching in meaningful ways? What might God ask of us in mind, spirit, or actions?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How have you experienced God's peace, presence, and/or power in the midst of a past crisis, or perhaps even during this pandemic?</li> <li>Is there someone in your life who has sacrificed something on your behalf or for your greater good?</li> <li>As Jesus sacrificed himself for us, in what ways can we sacrifice to show love and embody Christ to our community?</li> </ol>
<p><b>PRAYER PRACTICE</b> (15 minutes)</p>	<p>At its core, <b>fasting</b> is choosing to temporarily set aside something in order to draw closer to God. But these days, what you give up isn't restricted to food, entertainment, or pleasure. This month our spiritual practice will be '<b>fasting</b>' with a different focus each week. Remember - God is interested in who we're becoming.</p> <p><i>"Guarding tombs is a joyless job, as anyone who has ever sought to keep the past from the future will attest. Are you weary of hiding the past from the future?... Do you believe in new life? We quote Easter's promise, "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Cor.5:17). Yet we still permit shame to haunt our past...</i></p> <p><i>...Is shame standing watch over any dead things in your life? Jesus died to forgive you--follow his example and forgive yourself. Fast guarding that tomb. Let an earthquake or an angel roll away the stone so that you can see that nothing is there anymore. It is empty. Jesus conquered it. Jesus removed it. All that there is now is light and hope."</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>- Alicia Britt Chole</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">This week, fast <b>guarding tombs</b>.</p>

### GROUP SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

- Take 2 minutes in silence to reflect on what "tombs" you are still guarding.
- Then allow God to show you how empty this tomb is, and see instead, light and hope. Allow 5 minutes of silence to let God reveal this to you. Thank Jesus for leading you to this new light and hope.
- As led by the Holy Spirit, share what you are hearing, first by typing into the chat of your virtual meeting so members can read and process silently, and then verbally.

Throughout the weeks leading up to Easter, continue sharing what you are experiencing with this fast through chat, emails, texts, etc.

(Adapted from 40 Days of Decrease: A Different Kind of Hunger. A Different Kind of Fast, Alicia Britt Chole).