

Week Six: Anguish, Agony, and Atonement

For the group: set the table with a cross and a lighted candle.

As you begin, pray: Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what He wants you to see, learn, feel, experience, know, and hope.

Introduction

Jesus and the disciples have left the upper room where they celebrated Passover and have gone to the Garden of Gethsemane. While in the garden, Jesus becomes very troubled at what lays before him.

Anguish in the Garden



Read Luke 22:39-46

Jesus pours out his heart to his father in the garden. What is the most meaningful to you in this story? Why?

Arrest



Read John 18:1-27 and Luke 22:54-62

Jesus is arrested and taken before the High Priest. We read that one disciple “who was known to the high priest” went in with Jesus but Peter stood outside the door. Scholars believe that the disciple who went in with Jesus was John. Think about Peter’s denial. Why do you think he denied knowing Jesus? After Peter’s third denial, Jesus turns to look at Peter. Do you think that Jesus looked at Peter with scorn? Or with love? Can

you see Jesus looking at you? What would have been in that look? If that look had been contemptuous or filled with hatred, would Peter have felt such remorse and guilt? Would he not have felt justified in denying that man who was now looking at him with such hatred? But when Jesus looks at us with such all-encompassing love, our hearts are stripped of defenses, of self-erected walls.

Hebrews 4:14-16 says, “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Try praying this scripture, and as you pray this, thank God because of his mercy and grace, you can boldly approach the throne of the Most High, the creator of heaven and earth. Ask God to strengthen your faith and to help you to come to him in faith in all things.

Agony



Read Matthew 26:57-27:61; Mark 15:16-41

For the group: extinguish the candle. Notice the darkness.

Jesus is tortured, mocked, and crucified. Not only does he endure the excruciating agony of the crucifixion, he also endures the spiritual agony of taking on the sin of the world, the separation from the Father. What is most meaningful in this story to you? What is the most difficult aspect of Jesus’ agony and death to read or think about?

On the cross, Jesus experiences the sense of being absent from God. This feeling of being absent from God has become known as the “dark night of the soul,” and almost every one struggles through this at some point in the journey with God. We saw darkness used in Exodus to represent absence from God. For some, it is a short season; for others, much longer. Have you experienced this feeling of being absent from God? Isaiah 45:3 talks about “treasures of darkness.” The tomb in one sense is the dark night of the soul that ultimately leads to the light of Christ. What needs to die in your life so that new life can come?

Atonement,

For the group: light the candle again. Remember that Jesus, the Light of the world, has come to bring us into his eternal light.



Read 1 Peter 1:13-16; 2:9

Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, the ultimate fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan, our High Priest, has made atonement for us. What do these passages in 1 Peter say about our identity in Christ?

As you end, think about:

- **Praise:** What praise would you offer to God, our creator and redeemer?
- **Petition:** What petition would you bring before the Most High King?
- **Protection:** in what areas of your life do you feel like you need protection? Ask God, the Great Shepherd, to hold you close to his heart.
- **Promise:** What promise is the most meaningful to you? What promise brings you the most comfort? What promise gives you the most hope?
- **Perspective:** What does all of this mean to you? What does knowing that YOUR story is part of God's redemptive story of all mankind mean to you?

May you live in the freedom and glory of Christ's resurrection power!

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