

March 5, 2026

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Road to the cross.

Series Connect Notes.

Announcements:

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| All in Prayer | <i>We are gathering to pray together on Wednesday 11th March from 6:30pm–7:30pm. You can join the prayer here: https://c3syd.church/prayer/. This will be followed by a special CG Leader Training with Ps Alex. Please be there as it will be a leadership equipping moment!</i> |
| Online Prayer | <i>If someone in your connect group can't make it to a face-to-face prayer meeting, they are welcome to join our Online Prayer Meeting from 6.30pm - 7.00pm. This is a great alternative! Here's the link to join or share: https://c3syd.church/prayer/</i> |
| Freedom Ministry | <i>Freedom Ministry is Holy Spirit directed and empowered prayer ministry aimed to bring healing to an individual spirit, soul and body. If you or anyone in your cg is interested in accessing this ministry, please fill in the form below and our team will be in touch: https://c3syd.info/freedom</i> |
| Foundations | <i>Online Foundations is starting on 25th March. If someone in your connect group recently said yes to Jesus or are just starting in their faith journey, this is for them. It's a space to learn the basics of following Jesus and start building strong foundations for life.</i> |

Message Series Overview

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| Message Series Title: | Road to the cross |
| Message Series Scriptures: | Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. (intertextual engagement) |

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| Series Purpose: | Walking through the Gospels to see the humanity of Jesus, the heart of Christ, and the weight of His love on the way to the cross. |
| Weekly Overview: | <p>Week 1: The Road to the Cross: Introduction</p> <p>Week 2: The Road to the Cross: Calling and Obedience</p> <p>Week 3: The Road to the Cross: Compassion and Relationships</p> <p>Week 4: The Road to the Cross: Betrayal, Injustice & Silence</p> |

Week 1: Connect week notes

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| Connect Week Notes | Week 1 |
| Message Title: | The Road to the Cross |
| Message Date: | Sunday 8 th March 2026 |

Key Scriptures for this week: Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 2:14-18, Revelation 1:18.

Historical Context, Commentary + supporting references:

Sometimes as Christians we can see Jesus as only a divine being, we can think that perhaps he skirted through life without an issue, almost like he hovered above sin, worry, anxiety, suffering and pain. But Jesus lived a fully human life, he felt the sear of pain, grief, sin, anxiety, and he died a painful death, reaching the limits of humanity and went right through it in the resurrection and ascension. In this series we are focusing on the humanity of Jesus, walking with Him the journey to the cross where sin was dealt its final blow with Jesus' conquering death and Hades.

Practically this series answers the questions: does Jesus really understand what it is to feel depressed, anxious, suffer grief, pain, and face suffering? Yes, he does, and he not only felt those things and walked through them, but he made a way, through the cross, for us to not just walk through them but have victory over them.

It is important at Easter that we understand the humanity of Jesus, that he didn't float through life as an apparition or a separated spirit, he felt humanity, the pain, the worry, he

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was hungry, he cried, he laughed: 100% human AND 100% divine. He is both Jesus and Christ. Jesus is his personal name, what people called him as a person. It means “God saves.” Christ is a title, meaning “the anointed one” or “Messiah,” showing his special role as God’s chosen Saviour. He felt the pain of the crucifixion, he felt the pain of rejection, betrayal, loneliness, and he came to give humanity answers to them all – through his death and resurrection.

When Jesus calls us to overcome pain, suffering, anxiety, to forgive when we are betrayed, to overcome loneliness and finally to face death, he does it as a High Priest that knows those things intimately and paved a way through his death, resurrection, and ascension for our humanity to be set free. He redefined the limits of our humanity by overcoming the ultimate limit death of our flesh and defeating it once and for all!

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 2:14-18

¹⁴ Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. ¹⁷ For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Revelation 1:18

I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

“These three words—Christ conquered death—define the most important difference between Christianity and all other religions. No other religious leader ever predicted his own death and resurrection ([Matthew 16:21](#)), based his claims about himself and his teaching on that prediction ([John 2:18 –22](#); [Matthew 27:40](#)), and then kept that promise ([Luke 24:6](#)). Jesus’ resurrection marks the first time in history that someone rose from the dead never to die again. Others who were resurrected eventually died a second time (see [1 Kings 17:17–24](#); [2 Kings 4:32–37](#); [Mark 5:39–42](#); [John 11:38–44](#)). Jesus’ resurrection was

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a true and total defeat of death. As the Holy Son of God, Jesus overcame death once and for all, as Peter explained: "It was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:24). Christ's conquest of death was permanent and eternal."

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-Christ-conquered-death.html>

Connect Group Message:

Key Areas of Jesus' Life and Humanity

- **Birth and Development:** Jesus' life began with a human birth to Mary in humble circumstances in Bethlehem, followed by growth and development in Nazareth. Luke's Gospel emphasizes that Jesus "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man," highlighting his genuine human development.
- **Physical and Emotional Experiences:** The Gospels consistently portray Jesus experiencing the full range of human physical and emotional realities.
 - **Physical Needs:** He experienced hunger (Matthew 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), and weariness, often needing rest or sleep (John 4:6, Matthew 8:24).
 - **Emotions:** He displayed anger (at the money changers in the Temple and the "hardness" of some hearts), sorrow (he wept at Lazarus's tomb and was "troubled" in spirit before his crucifixion), compassion, and joy.
- **Temptation and Obedience:** Jesus faced temptation by the devil in the wilderness but resisted, demonstrating a sinless life and perfect obedience to God's will. His struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying for a different path if possible, further highlights his human will and his ultimate submission to the Father's divine will.
- **Public Ministry:** Jesus' humanity is also evident in his interactions during his ministry:
 - He worked as a carpenter (craftsman) in his early life.
 - He mingled with all levels of society, including the ostracized, the poor, and the sick, demonstrating compassion and breaking social barriers.
 - He taught with authority using parables and performing miracles as acts of love and mercy, which attested to both his humanity and divinity.
- **Suffering and Death:** The Passion narrative is a key area emphasizing his humanity. He suffered betrayal, arrest, trial, physical pain, and death by crucifixion. His cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" shows the depth of

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his human suffering. (**Preaching note:** Can we just make sure the Trinity isn't broken by the preachers – Jesus felt the forsakenness – but he and the Father are still one. Heard an interesting explanation – it is Jesus entering into every human experience including our forsakenness – so feeling it without being forsaken by the Father. In the same way that he took sin upon himself without sinning.)

- **Resurrection and Ascension:** His bodily resurrection and subsequent ascension into heaven confirm that he remains in his human form, a glorified human being.

These aspects are crucial to Christian belief, as Jesus' full humanity allowed him to serve as humanity's representative and substitute, making atonement for sin possible through his sacrifice.

Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out to you about Jesus' humanity from Hebrews 2:14–18 and Hebrews 4:14–16? How does knowing that Jesus felt what we feel shape the way you approach Him?
2. Jesus experienced hunger, thirst, weariness, sorrow, joy, anger, and deep emotional pain. Which human experience of Jesus do you personally relate to most right now, and why?
3. Jesus suffered deeply yet overcame through the resurrection. How does His suffering and victory shape the way you think about your own struggles?
4. Jesus is both 100% human and 100% divine. What difference does it make in your daily life that He understands your pain and invites you to approach the throne of grace with confidence?
5. Who in your world right now needs to know that Jesus understands them and offers hope? What step can you take this week to invite them into a conversation, to church, or to explore Jesus further?

Week 2: Connect week notes

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| Connect Week Notes | Week 2 |
| Message Title: | Calling & Obedience |

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| Message Date: | Sunday 15 th March 2026 |
| Key Scriptures for this week: Luke 2:41-52 (obedient to a Father and Mother), Matthew 3:13-17 (His baptism); Matthew 4:1-11 | |
| Connect Group Message: Calling & Obedience – <i>A Human Yes to the Father.</i> Hebrews 5:8 ⁷ During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek. 1 John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. Human focus: Submission, learning obedience, resisting temptation. Big Idea: Before Jesus carried a cross, He carried obedience. The road begins with daily surrender, not public sacrifice. Humanity Highlight: Jesus learns obedience through what He suffers—He chooses trust in the Father again and again. Focus: Jesus choosing obedience within real human limitations Key moments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The boy Jesus at the temple (Luke 2:41-52) – Jesus' desire to be in His Father's house and his v51 he was then obedient to his mother and father and grew in favour with God and man v52.• Baptism (Matthew 3:13-17) – Jesus submits, not because He needs it, but because obedience matters• Temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11) – hunger, isolation, pressure• "I only do what I see the Father doing" (John 5:19) Humanity highlighted: Jesus learns obedience (Hebrews 5:8). He resists temptation not by bypassing humanity, but by trusting the Word and the Spirit. | |

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Series angle: The road to the cross begins with daily, costly obedience—long before the pain is visible.

Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Jesus' obedience is a model for us of how we were designed to live in relationship with God before the fall. Since we now have access to the Father and can see His plan, writ large in the Bible, how does this help us to trust God daily instead of trying to get our own way?
2. How have you seen daily obedience transform a person over time (either you, or someone else)? Discuss ways in which we can "go the extra mile" in following Jesus' example, for the purpose of showing His love to others.
3. What daily habits have helped you, or would help you with daily submission (for example, the Lord's Prayer)? What can be your next step?
4. Where do you struggle to see temptations as not trusting God? For example, do you find the world's way of life "makes more sense" than God's instructions in certain areas? Do you struggle to trust God's timing in certain areas?
5. Are there stressors that make it hard for you to stay trusting and obedient (for example, money worries), just like Jesus in the wilderness?
6. Who in your world could you invite to church this Easter? Share their names and take a moment as a Connect Group to pray for them and for an opportunity to invite them.

Week 3: Connect week notes

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| Connect Week Notes | Week 3 |
| Message Title: | Compassion & Relationships |
| Message Date: | Sunday 22 nd March 2026 |
| Key Scriptures for this week: John 11:33–36 (Jesus weeping at the tomb of Lazarus); John 13:1-17 (Jesus washes his disciples' feet), Mark 10:21 (he looked at him and loved him); John 13:1 (he loved his disciples to the end). | |

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Connect Group Message:

Compassion & Relationships – *A Heart That Feels Deeply*

Key Scriptures: John 11:33–36 (Jesus weeping at the tomb of Lazarus); John 13:1–17 (Jesus washes his disciples' feet), Mark 10:21 (he looked at him and loved him); John 13:1 (he loved his disciples to the end).

John 15:9–17 (focus 15:13)

¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Human focus: Love, grief, friendship, emotional vulnerability

Big Idea: Jesus does not walk the road alone. He loves deeply, knowing love will cost Him everything.

Humanity Highlight: He weeps, loves, hopes, and is wounded by those closest to Him.

Focus: Jesus' emotional life and relational vulnerability

Key moments:

- Weeping at Lazarus' tomb (John 11:33–36)
- Loving the rich young ruler (Mark 10:21)
- Washing his disciples' feet (John 13:1–17)
- Deep friendships with the disciples (John 13–17)

Humanity highlighted: Jesus feels grief, love, disappointment, and compassion. He is moved by suffering, betrayal, and loss.

Series angle: The road to the cross is paved with love—love that costs, aches, and breaks the heart.

Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Jesus deeply felt human emotions—grief, love, disappointment, compassion. Which moment from the key scriptures most reveals His emotional vulnerability to you, and why?

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2. The road to the cross was paved with love that 'costs, aches, and breaks the heart.' Where in your own life does love feel costly right now? How might Jesus' example encourage you?
3. Jesus loved imperfect people to the end. How does His willingness to love those who betray or disappoint challenge you in your relationships?
4. 'Greater love has no one than this...' What does laying down your life look like in everyday, practical ways? Where is Jesus inviting you to deeper compassion?
5. Who in your world right now needs to experience the compassion of Jesus? What step could you take this week to reach out and invite them to encounter Him?

Week 4: Connect week notes

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| Connect Week Notes | Week 4 |
| Message Title: | Betrayal, Injustice & Silence |
| Message Date: | Sunday 29 th March 2026 |
| Key Scriptures for this week: Luke 22:47–48 (betrayal); Matthew 26:56–68 (before the Sanhedrin), John 19 (Jesus is whipped). | |
| <p>Connect Group Message:</p> <p>Wounded by Others, Silent Before God</p> <p>Key Scriptures: Luke 22:47–48 (betrayal); Matthew 26:56–68 (before the Sanhedrin), John 19 (Jesus is whipped).</p> <p>Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.</p> | |

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Human focus: Betrayal, abandonment, false accusation

Big Idea: The road to the cross passes through injustice, misunderstanding, and silence. Before Jesus carries the weight of the world's sin, He carries the weight of human cruelty—betrayal by a friend, rejection by religious leaders, abandonment by His followers, and silence before false accusation. Jesus does not bypass human suffering; He enters it fully.

This is not just a spiritual moment—it is deeply personal, emotional, and human.

Key moments:

- Betrayed by Judas (Luke 22:47-48)
- Before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:56-68)
- 39 lashes and the crown of thorns (John 19)

1. Betrayed by Judas — A Wound from a Friend (Luke 22:47-48)

Jesus is not betrayed by a stranger, but by someone who walked with Him, ate with Him, and shared ministry with Him. Judas approaches with a kiss—an act meant to express affection—now twisted into an act of deception.

Jesus' response is not rage, panic, or retaliation, but heartbreak and clarity:

“Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

Human Reality:

- Betrayal cuts deepest when it comes from those closest to us
- Jesus feels the sting of relational loss and broken trust
- He knows what it is to be wounded by someone He loved

2. Abandoned by the Disciples — Alone in His Suffering (Matthew 26:56)

“When all the disciples deserted Him and fled.”

In Jesus' darkest hour, the people who promised loyalty scatter. The bravado of earlier confidence dissolves into fear. Jesus stands alone.

Human Reality:

- Loneliness intensifies suffering
- Jesus experiences isolation, not just physically, but emotionally
- The Son of God knows what it feels like to be left behind

3. Before the Sanhedrin — False Accusation and Mockery (Matthew 26:56-68)

Jesus is dragged before a religious court determined to condemn Him. False witnesses contradict one another. The trial is unjust, illegal, and driven by envy and fear.

He is mocked, beaten, blindfolded, and struck—then told to “prophesy” who hit Him.

Human Reality:

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- Jesus is misrepresented and misunderstood
- He is condemned not for wrongdoing, but for truth
- He is treated as guilty while being completely innocent

4. Silent Before His Accusers — Choosing Restraint (*Isaiah 53:7*)

“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth...”

Jesus has every right to defend Himself. He could expose lies, summon angels, or overturn the injustice—but He chooses silence.

This silence is not weakness.

It is strength under control.

It is trust in the Father’s plan.

Human Reality:

- Silence can be more painful than shouting
- Jesus understands what it is to be unheard and misjudged
- He entrusts Himself to God when words would not change the outcome

5. Beaten, Mocked, and Crowned with Thorns (*John 19*)

Jesus is flogged—39 lashes tearing into His back. Roman soldiers twist a crown of thorns and press it into His scalp. They mock Him as “King,” dress Him in a robe, and strike Him again.

This is humiliation layered upon pain.

Human Reality:

- Physical suffering combined with emotional degradation
- Jesus experiences shame, brutality, and public humiliation
- The King of Heaven stands exposed and wounded

Humanity Highlight

Jesus knows what it is to be:

- Betrayed by a close friend
- Abandoned by those He trusted
- Falsely accused and misunderstood
- Treated unjustly
- Silent when speaking would not stop the pain

He is not distant from our wounds—He carries them.

Why This Matters for Us

- When you’ve been betrayed, Jesus understands
- When you’ve been falsely accused, Jesus has been there
- When God feels silent, remember that Jesus walked through silence too
- When injustice seems unchecked, Jesus knows that road

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The cross was not only about bearing sin—it was about entering human suffering fully, so no pain would be foreign to Him.

Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Knowing Jesus suffered all this for us, how can we support people we know when they are misunderstood, abandoned and accused? Who are some other examples in the Old Testament of those who had to trust God for their vindication? Have a quick look at one of them (For example, Joseph, Job, David, many prophets). What does it add to the gospel account of Jesus' trial?
2. Our world has a lot to say about wrongdoing: cancel culture, statements to the media, and trials of public opinion. What do the gospels say about how Jesus people are to behave in all of this?
3. Have you had times when you wondered if God cared or was even listening? Is there something that needs to change in your thinking, in light of Jesus' sufferings in the Easter story? What are some verses that can strengthen your trust in God by reminding you that Jesus understands?
4. As we approach Easter, what has struck you personally about Jesus' actions on our behalf? How do you express your thanks to Jesus as we remember His sacrifice each year? What could be your next step?
5. As Easter approaches, who could you personally invite to a Good Friday or Easter Sunday service? Pray together as a Connect Group for those people and for boldness and the right moment to invite them.

Week 5: Connect week notes

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| Connect Week Notes | Week 5 |
| Message Title: | The Cross |
| Message Date: | Sunday 5 th April 2026 |
| Key Scriptures for this week: Luke 23:44–49 (Jesus' death); John 19:30–34 (it is finished); Luke 24:36–43 (Resurrected Jesus' appears to disciples) | |

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Connect Group Message:

1 Corinthians 15:20

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Colossians 2:13–15

¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you^[a] alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.^[b]

Hebrews 2:14–15

¹⁴Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— ¹⁵and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Big Idea: Jesus truly dies—and truly rises in a physical, resurrected body—defeating sin, death, and the powers of darkness once and for all.

Humanity Highlight:

- His body is beaten, pierced, and lifeless
- He breathes His last breath
- He experiences real death, not an illusion
- He rises not as a spirit, but in glorified flesh

Victory of the Cross:

- **Sin is paid for** – “It is finished” is a declaration of completed victory, not defeat (John 19:30)
- **Death is defeated** – Death does not get the final word (1 Corinthians 15:20–26)
- **The powers are disarmed** – The cross becomes the moment of public triumph over hell itself (Colossians 2:15)
- **Fear is broken** – By entering death and rising again, Jesus frees humanity from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14–15)
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Resurrection Focus: The resurrection is not an escape from humanity, but the redemption of it. Jesus carries scars into resurrection—proof that suffering was not erased but transformed into victory.

Hope for Us:

Because Jesus rose bodily:

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- Our suffering is not wasted
- Our bodies matter
- Our future is secure
- Death is no longer something we fear, but something Christ has already conquered

The cross looked like loss—but it was the greatest victory the world has ever seen.

Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. What stands out to you about Jesus' humanity—His beaten body, final breath, and real death—from Luke 23:44–49 and John 19:30–34?
2. Colossians 2:13–15 describes Jesus cancelling our debt and disarming darkness. How does the victory of the cross shape how you view spiritual battles?
3. Jesus rises bodily in glorified flesh, scars included. How does the physical resurrection affect the way you think about your future and hope?
4. Because Jesus conquered death, our suffering is not wasted and our future is secure. Where do you need resurrection hope right now?
5. Who in your world needs the message of the cross and resurrection? What step can you take this week to invite them to church or a conversation about Jesus?