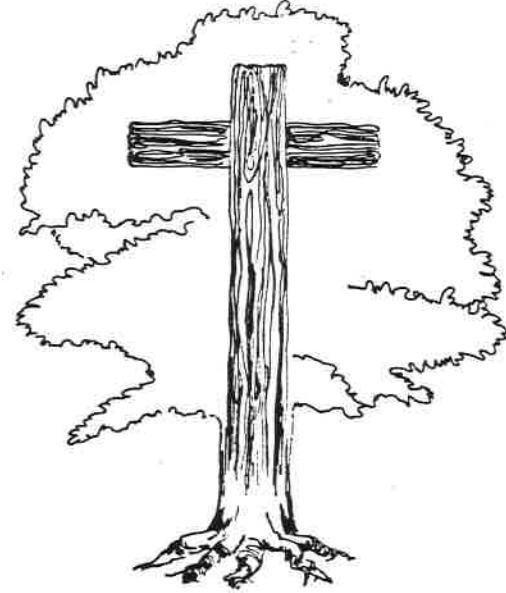


## Session 1

# The wood of the cross



## The call to Follow

*"And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross " Phil 2:8*

We begin these five studies by looking at the cross itself. It was made of wood. Wood in turn comes from trees. Jesus the carpenter was well acquainted with both the living form and the useful product. The symbol of the tree runs through the Bible from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, from which Eve took the forbidden fruit, to the cross, which S. Peter calls "the tree"[1Peter 2:24\*] and on which Jesus hung,"the firstfruits of those who believe"[1 Cor.15:20\*]

*From the wood to the weave*

# PREPARATIONS - LENTEN 1

## The wood of the cross

### Day 1

**Read:** Deut 21:23\* and Galatians 3:13-14

The law of Israel saw crucifixion as carrying God's curse. So, to the physical pain of Jesus on the cross there was added the spiritual torture of thinking himself abandoned by his Father. He died on the tree of the cross as a cursed criminal, but because he did that he has saved us from a cold and legalistic religion and shown us just how far the warmth of the love of God will go in order to redeem his people.

**Ponder:** Jesus was prepared to become "cursed" for me. In what circumstances do I back down from full Christian belief and practice because I fear the curses or the name calling of others?

**Pray:** Lord, please strengthen me and all who fear the taunts or ridicule of others.

### Day 2

**Read:** Genesis 6:14 and Romans 8:19-23

We get an early hint about the sacred wood of salvation when Noah is told to build an ark of wood. Through it God lifts above the flood representatives of every creature on earth. He saves them for a new beginning. Later, in the New Testament, Jesus is raised up on the wood of the cross above the world's sin, and, through his death, brings restoration and salvation to the whole creation. Everything is restored to new life.

**Ponder:** How do I use the things that God has made? Is it with a sense that everything is holy because it is the Lord's?

**Pray:** Lord, teach me to see your hand in everything and everyone around me...a world and a people for whom Jesus has died!

### DAY 3

**Read:** Exodus 37:1 and John 12:32

There is a second ark made of wood mentioned in the Old Testament. It is not a boat but a box containing the stone tablets of the law given to Moses. The law rested in this wooden ark in the Temple at the centre of the Jewish national life. It was the symbol of God's covenant or agreement...his old testament. When Jesus came to establish the new agreement [or new Testament] it was not to be based on law but on love. Jesus replaces the ark. He too is held up at the very centre of history, for all people, on the wood of the cross. He is God's new way of calling his people home to himself.

**Ponder:** Is it obedience to the rules and fear of the consequences of breaking them which determines what I do, or is it God's will and love for his people that motivates me?

**Pray:** Lord, may I know your laws and love your ways and always be open to the fresh guidance of your Holy Spirit.

### Day 4

**Read:** Luke 19:1-6 and Mark 15:30 & 32

There is a useful comparison here between Jesus and Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus climbed a tree so that he might look on Jesus. The result was that Jesus called him down from his tree to meet his salvation and Zacchaeus obeyed. Jesus was nailed to the tree of

the cross and looked up to his father and out on all humanity. He obeyed his Father's will and refused to come down when the world called him to do so. He bore it so as to bring salvation to all.

**Ponder:** What are the things in my life Jesus is asking me to stick with? What are the things he is calling me out from so that I might receive his blessing?

**Pray:** Lord, help me to see your will more clearly in the things I take on and in the things I give up.

### Day 5

**Read:** Mark 15:21 and Matthew 11:29-30

Simon was forced to carry the heavy wooden crosspiece for Jesus. There would seem to be nothing but burden and shame in that. Yet Jesus the carpenter, who must have made many yokes, promised that his would be easy. Did Simon find ease through carrying the yoke of the cross? He and his two sons are known by name to the Christian Church by the time Mark wrote down his Gospel. That suggests that they became believers.

**Ponder:** In what ways do I feel "put upon" or bear a heavy burden? If I let Jesus walk beside me and bear it for him, what then?

**Pray:** For all who are "burden bearers" in this world.

### Day 6

**Read:** Luke 9:23-25 and John 10:10

What Simon of Cyrene was forced to do, we are all invited to do. If we want to follow Jesus we must take up the cross as well as the blessings. Each day involves a fresh decision to follow our blessed Master. However, we have the promise of Jesus that what looks like loss will lead to life more abundant than we have ever known.

Your  
Notes



**Ponder:** Every now and then I decide that carrying the cross is too hard. In what kinds of situations do I rest awhile and put it down?

**Pray:** Give me patient endurance Lord, to go on to the end with you, no matter how heavy the burden or stony the road.

*From the wood to the weave*

*From the wood to the weave*

# SHARING WITH OTHERS

**Focus:** The call to follow in the way of obedience and sacrifice.  
Session 1



## Welcome and introductions

### Opening Prayer

Lord our God, your Son Jesus was nailed to the wood of the cross for the salvation of all people and bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Bring your light to us now as we consider your word and help us to see that the darkness and evil of this fallen world have been overcome by your great love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



### Getting started

Share and discuss with the other members of your group any question, problem or observation that has come out of the daily readings for you.



### Read the Scripture passage.

Genesis 22: 1 to 19

### Questions for reflection

1. Write down what you think this story is mainly about:

BLESSING: OBEDIENCE: SACRIFICE:  
FATHERHOOD: OTHER:

.....  
Share with group members what you put and why.

2. Why do you think God provided a ram?



*From the wood to the weave*

- 3 (i) What promises are given in this story?  
(ii) Why are they given?  
(iii) What has to happen before they are fulfilled?  
(iv) In what ways are they fulfilled?  
(v) In what ways is this story relevant today?

4 Read verses 13 and 14 and then John 3:16.  
What do these verses tell us about God?

5 Abraham was so obedient that he was prepared to hand over his own son's life to God.  
What would be the last thing you could hand over to God if he were to ask it and why?



### Discussion highlights

Share anything important that has happened for you in this session.



### Closing prayer

(Allow time and opportunity for group prayer, finish with this set prayer if you so desire).

Heavenly Father your patience and mercies are endless. Help us to go out and carry the burdens of those who bear heavy loads and then to bring them to the foot of the cross and give them to Jesus who bears our griefs and carries our sorrows and who makes all burdens light. Amen.



### Fellowship and a Cuppa

### Something to do

Plant a tree or bush this week and as you pass it each day give thanks for what Jesus has done for you on the wood of the cross.

OR:- Make up a plain wooden cross and put it in some prominent place at home or at work, as a constant reminder of God's saving love.



*From the wood to the weave*