JOHN WALTONEE

# SEEKING JESUS

Visuals With Points To Ponder
To Help You Find Jesus' Principles

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## SEEKING JESUS
## THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS CHRIST

LET'S BEGIN WITH A QUESTION

## QUESTION

If the scriptures and church leaders emphasize CALVARY, why is it that many Latter-day Saints tend to emphasize GETHSEMANE?

Crucifixion of Christ, Carl Heinrich Bloch

One possible reason for the emphasis on Gethsemane is doctrinal misunderstanding. Some Church members have thought that Christ atoned for our sins and overcame spiritual death in Gethsemane and then separately conquered physical death on the cross.

## A DOCTRINAL MISUNDERSTANDING

| GETHSEMANE | THE CROSS |
|---|---|
| the place where Christ atoned for our sins and overcame spiritual death. | the place where Christ conquered physical death. |

Elder Gerald Lund called that a doctrinal error. He wrote,

*"Nowhere in the scriptures do we find indications that the cross alone overcame physical death or that the Garden alone overcame spiritual death."*

Another doctrinal misunderstanding that you'll sometimes hear people say is,
"Many individuals were crucified, so there's nothing special about Christ dying on a cross. What's special is Gethsemane."

That statement ignores the fact that dozens of scriptures teach that Jesus died for our sins.

## CONSIDER

WHAT CHRIST EXPERIENCED ON THE CROSS IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM ANY OTHER VICTIM OF CRUCIFIXION.

Here's what President Russell M. Nelson taught,

*"In the Garden of Gethsemane, our Savior took upon Himself every pain, every sin, and all of the anguish and suffering ever experienced by you and me and by everyone who has ever lived or will ever live. Under the weight of that overwhelming burden, He bled from every pore.[1] Much if we stopped there, many of us would say, "Yes, that's what I knew about Gethsemane."*

## NOTICE

Notice President Nelson's very next sentence:
*"All of this suffering was intensified as He was cruelly crucified on Calvary's cross."*

Whatever you picture Christ experiencing in Gethsemane, President Nelson said that it was intensified on the cross.

We have some unique knowledge in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints about what happened in Gethsemane. Maybe because so many other Christians have emphasized Christ on the cross, we have the unique knowledge from the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants about Christ's suffering in Gethsemane. some of us have mainly highlighted the garden of Gethsemane.

Perhaps most significantly, the lack of Crucifixion iconography in the church is a key reason why many Latter-day Saints don't focus on Christ's Crucifixion to the extent that the scriptures and church leaders do.

In the 19th class of the Seeking Jesus course, we talked extensively about the history of the image of the cross in the church—and you can find more resources on that topic on the course website.

It's important to remember that there is a big difference between

## THE SYMBOL & THE DOCTRINE

| THE CROSS AS A SYMBOL | THE CROSS AS THE UNCHANGING |
|---|---|
| the meaning of which can vary over place and time. | doctrinal reality that Jesus was crucified for our sins. |

It's possible that HOW we have treated the symbol has for some overshadowed this doctrine.

The scriptures repeatedly teach that Jesus manifested his love for us through his death.

## I DON'T LIKE
TO THINK ABOUT HIS DEATH

When speaking of the Crucifixion, one woman shared,
*I understand Christ died for my sins, but I don't really like to think about his death. I prefer to remember the Resing Christ."*

Church leaders have focused on THE LIVING CHRIST, and it is certainly the living Christ who we worship. We cannot emphasize enough the importance THAT JESUS CHRIST LIVES TODAY!

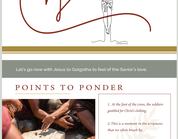
We also worship A LIVING CHRIST, and the scriptures repeatedly teach that both Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ manifested their love for us through the Savior's death.

We also believe in the living Christ.

We love these words, written by a 19th Century Latter-day Saint in the Woman's Exponent...

"AND WHEN WE DOUBT HIS LOVE
CAN WE BUT TURN
TO CALVARY'S HILLS WHERE
LOVE DOTH PUREST BURN."

## CONSIDER THEN
THE LIVING CHRIST AND THE LOVING CHRIST.



Let's go now with Jesus to Golgotha to feet of the Savior's love.

## POINTS TO PONDER

Christ on the Cross, Carl Bloch

*1. At the foot of the cross, the soldiers gambled for Christ's clothing.*

*2. This is a moment in the scriptures that we often fixed by.*

*3. A piece from President Clyke can change the way we think about this.*

Christ Being Stripped of His Garments, Carl Bloch



*"During a tragic afternoon on Calvary, a handful of soldiers waited at the foot of a cross. The most important event in all eternity was taking place on the cross above their heads. Oblivious to that fact, they occupied themselves casting lots to divide the earthly property of the dying Son of God."*
PRESIDENT DALLIN H. OAKS

## CONSIDER

We might think, "How could these soldiers be missing the power of this moment?" But could we also say, "LORD, IS IT I?"

Every week we can remember this exact same moment.

In a sense, WE ARE AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

**Are we distracted by trivial things?** Thinking about the soldiers at the cross CAN make it a lot harder for us and our families to pull out our phones during sacrament meeting because we want TO **BE PRESENT at the cross.**

## CONSIDER THEN

### THE CRUCIFIXION

Josephus described crucifixion as being

*"The most pitiable of deaths."*

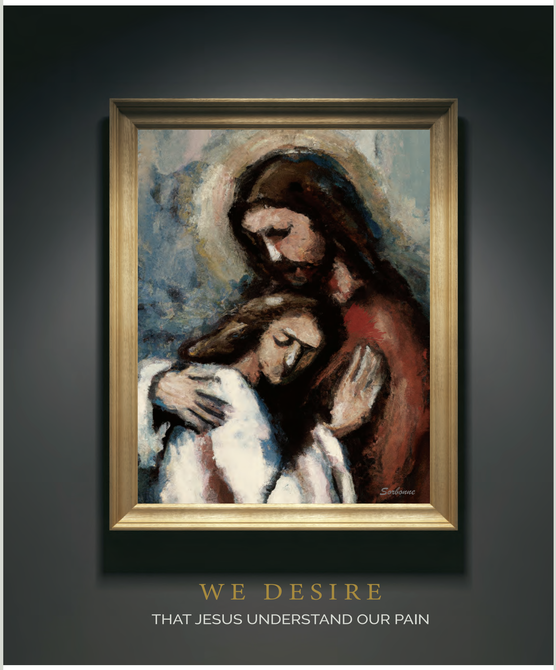
Perhaps for some of us, we don't want to know the details of crucifixion because it's painful.

At the same time, consider what Elder Callister said:

*"The difficulty of understanding what Christ experienced "does not absolve the need (nor should it diminish our desire) to know what is 'knowable.'"*

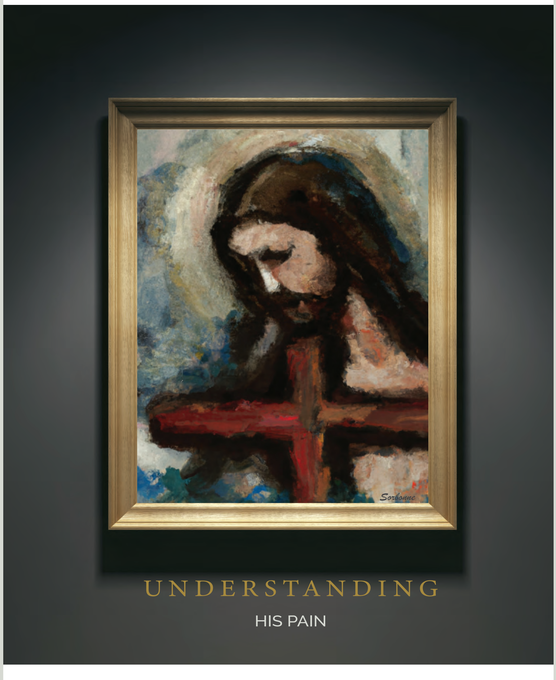
### CHRIST'S ATONEMENT IS INFINITE.

We're never going to be able to comprehend even a tiny portion of it, but we can still learn what we can.




IS IT TOO MUCH TO ASK -

FOR US TO LEARN A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT **HIS PAIN?**



## CONSIDER THEN THE ABUSE

Let's look at an aspect of crucifixion that can be uncomfortable:

Images and accounts from the ancient world suggest that people were crucified either naked or wearing only a small loincloth.

Of the three existing artistic depictions of crucifixion dated prior to 300 AD, two portray the crucifixion victims as naked. Although difficult to discuss, these details have helped some heal from extremely challenging circumstances, knowing that Christ understands what it means to be a victim of abuse.

### SOMETHING TO PONDER

Consider this story told by a Christian CORRIE TEN BOOM. She was captured by Nazis after helping Jews.

CORRIE TEN BOOM

In her book, The Hiding Place, she talks about how the hardest part of being in the concentration camp was that the Nazis made the prisoners strip every Friday for the "recurrent humiliation" of what they called a medical inspection.

"One Friday, as Corrie stood behind her frail and dying sister Betsie, the thought came to her:

*"He hung naked on the cross."*

*She whispered to Betsie, standing in front of her.*

*"They took His clothes, too."*

And she didn't feel ashamed anymore.

CORRIE TEN BOOM IN HER CELL AT RAVENSBRUCK, GERMANY, 1944

## CONSIDER

### Sugarcoating Painful Moments

We wonder if sometimes in our efforts to sugarcoat painful moments, including the Savior's crucifixion, we do a disservice to those who have gone through extreme pain.

We perhaps prevent them from connecting with the Savior who really understands what they have experienced.

We are not suggesting that if you're a primary teacher, you show the children Mel Gibson's The Passion of Christ. But there is power in understanding what we can know about the Savior's crucifixion and connecting with SITTING WITH THE PAIN THE SAVIOR EXPERIENCED. Knowing that he connects WITH WITH THE PAIN THAT WE EXPERIENCE and the the crosses we carry.

We hope that in the Savior's pain WE CAN SEE HIS LOVE.

## PONDER

### THE CONNECTION BETWEEN JESUS' SUFFERING AND HIS LOVE

In 1656, Grace C. Jacobsen published the following poem in the Relief Society Magazine, that helps us see the connection between the Savior's suffering and his love.

*"See the cross and bleeding feet,*
*Hear the cry of pain and anguish.*
*Hear the message, tender sweet,*
*Hear him calling, gently calling*
*All mankind to Him above,*
*For He gave His life a ransom,*
*From the depths of perfect love."*

## THE WOMEN

LET'S JOIN THE WOMEN WHO WERE PRESENT AT THE CROSS

In Mark Chapter 15:40. We read:

> *"There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. While also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem."*
>
> (Mark 15:40-41)

JESUS CALLING HIS DISCIPLES JAMES AND JOHN, SONS OF ZEBEDEE, ALONG WITH THEIR FATHER ZEBEDEE, MENDING NETS

John also tells us that Mary, the mother of Jesus and other women, were standing at the foot of the cross. It's interesting that no male disciples are explicitly named as being present at the Cross of Christ.

Clearly some male followers were present, but they are not named.

In contrast several women are named and many other women who were not named were there.

These aren't just people that met Christ last week, they've known him for a long time. They supported him in Galilee, they've traveled around Galilee with him, and now they've come with him to the cross.

CRUCIFIXION, 1565 OIL ON CANVAS, 165 CM × 98 CM (65 IN × 38 IN), MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID, SPAIN

And of course, the person who's been with Jesus the longest is his mother.

When Christ was an infant, he was prophesied to be born of a virgin, Mary and Joseph. A man named Simeon gave a prophecy to Mary:

> ***"Yea, she is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel; ... And a sword will pierce your own soul too" (Luke 2:34-35)***

Although a sword did not literally pierce Mary's body, think about her heart breaking as she stands just a few feet away from Jesus on the cross.

## A POEM ABOUT MARY

We love this medieval poem about Mary

"The sorrowing mother stood
Weeping by the cross
While her Son hung there
Her grieving soul
Sad and sorrowing
Was pierced by a sword
What person would not weep
Seeing the mother of Christ
In such torment?
Who would be inconsolate
Of sorrowing with her?
For the sins of his people
She sees Jesus in torment
And subjected to scourging
She sees her sweet child
Dying abandoned
As he gave forth his spirit"

CRUCIFIXION, 1500 OIL ON CANVAS, 100 CM × 75 CM (39 IN × 30 IN), MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES, BILBAO, SPAIN

Sister Elaine Jack, former General Relief Society president, taught:

> "At this most dramatic moment of all time, we see the mortals. Mary. She couldn't stomach his pain this time, but she could ——— STAND ON HIS SIDE."
>
> *Is there someone in your life that's suffering?*
>
> Maybe it's your mom, your dad, your brother, sister, a child, a relative, a close friend. They are suffering and there is nothing you can do. Sometimes that is the worst pain. You would rather be in pain yourself than the pain that they are going through.

"IS THERE SOMEONE IN YOUR LIFE SUFFERING?"

*See you tomorrow in the Celestial Kingdom, Mary Magdalene!*

In these moments, I think it's powerful to SITTING WITH THE WOMEN at the cross. To feel their tears and to know that they felt some when someone they loved was suffering. There was nothing that they could do, but they still stayed near Jesus, letting him know that he was not alone.

## LET'S NOW STUDY

### THE SEVEN STATEMENTS THAT CHRIST MADE ON THE CROSS

One meaningful way to approach Christ's Crucifixion is to consider the seven statements that Christ made on the cross.

Collectively, they have been referred to or quoted in general conferences more than three hundred times. You can see that the one most frequently quoted has been Christ's statement

*"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34)

These SEVEN statements show us the HEALING, HUMAN and DIVINE Jesus.

While it's hard to pinpoint the exact order of these statements, we can use an approximate order, and study them.






## CHRIST'S MERCY

### 1 CHRIST'S FIRST STATEMENT

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34)

We could ask ourselves, who is the "THEY" in that sentence?

The Joseph Smith translation says that Jesus spoke this concerning the Roman soldiers who crucified him. It's powerful to consider that Jesus is forgiving his crucifiers in that very moment.

President Kimball provides an even more expansive view of who the "they" refers to. He said:

> *"[Christ] did not wait till his crucifiers, the high priests, scribes, elders, and Pharisees, should have a change of heart, but forgave them while they were yet covered with his God-blood."*

What a compelling example of FORGIVENESS.

2

## CHRIST'S SECOND STATEMENT

For the contrast on Christ's second statement, let's read Luke 23:39.

*"One of the criminals who were hanged there kept derisking him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, seeing you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing amiss.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'*

*[Jesus] replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise'* (Luke 23:39 ff ESV)

In regards to this scripture, Joseph Smith said: ——————————

**"There is nothing in the original word in Greek from which this was taken; that signifies PARADISE, but it was this day thou shalt be with me in the world of Spirits."** And then he paraphrases what Jesus said:

"This day thou shalt be with me IN THE WORLD OF SPIRITS, then I will teach you all about it, and answer your inquiries."

In other words, Joseph Smith is teaching that Christ personally would attend to this thief on the cross, that day, in the world of spirits.

**Can you picture the moment if Jesus and the thief hung next to one together in the spirit world, and Jesus is personally teaching him?**

## CONSIDER

### JESUS MEETS SINNERS WHERE THEY ARE

Jesus began his public ministry at a synagogue in Nazareth stating that he would "preach liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Luke 4:18). Here appropriate that he ends his mortal ministry by proclaiming freedom to one who is physically bound on a cross and spiritually bound by sin. To me, this is a reminder that we do not need to put a false sense Jesus and time to prove himself, we are free! where he was, and Jesus is going to meet you and the where we are.

3

## CHRIST'S THIRD STATEMENT

In his third statement, Jesus addresses his mother and the beloved disciple, who many believe to be John. Jesus says to his mother:

*"Woman, here is your son" and then says to John, "Here is your mother"* (John 19:26-27)

Sister Anne C. Pingree taught, "Even while suffering terrible agony on the cross, the thought of his mother and her needs." This is a beautiful example of a HEALING SAVIOR who reaches outward.

There's another way that we can think about this statement on the cross. If Jesus says to John: *"here is your mother,"* what does that say about John's relationship with Jesus? John will now be JESUS' BROTHER.

We love this insight from Professor Eric Huntsman, who says:

"As John was brought more closely into THE FAMILY OF CHRIST, … so we too are brought into a deeper relationship with our Lord by what happened on the cross."

CHRIST'S HUMANITY

4

## CHRIST'S FOURTH STATEMENT

The next statement is, "I am thirsty" (John 19:28). This is the least-quoted saying from the cross in General Conference.

But we love President Nelson's insight. He said:

"To a doctor of medicine, this is a very meaningful expression. Doctors know that when a patient goes into shock because of blood loss, invariably that patient—if still conscious—with parched and shriveled lips cries for water. Even though the Father and the Son knew well in advance what was to be experienced, the actually of it brought indescribable agony."

*"AFTER this, when Jesus knew that all was NOW finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture) "I am thirsty"*
(John 19:28 NIRV)

That Christ experienced anguishing thirst on the cross, gives him a powerful, unique in the physical realm sin-free. Now, if we were a physical observer, you might be thinking to yourself:
"John tends to focus on the divine. Jesus, so why would he record Jesus saying 'I AM THIRSTY'?"

Well, if you look at John 19:28, it says:

*"After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture)* "I am thirsty" (John 19:28 NIRV). John may be less concerned about the human experience of thirst that Jesus as a smallest-victim surely was having, but he's emphasizing,

"Jesus has finished everything and he's saying this specific phrase to fulfill scripture."

With this frame, John helps us see Christ's divinity and desire to fulfill his father's will.

5

## CHRIST'S FIFTH STATEMENT

Of all the seven statements, this is the most HUMAN:
Jesus: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*
(Mark 15:34 NIRV)

In his greatest distress, Christ was left to bear the full brunt of the sins of the world without the accompanying help of his father. He felt completely abandoned and alone. Many of us will feel at times like we are abandoned and alone. When this happens, we must follow Christ's example on Calvary and KEEP ON GOING.

CHRIST'S DIVINITY

6

## CHRIST'S SIXTH STATEMENT

Christ's final two statements from the cross show his DIVINITY:

Jesus said: *"It is finished"* (John 19:30)

Earlier in his ministry, Jesus taught that his purpose was *"to obey the will of the one who sent me and to finish the work he gave me to do"* (John 4:34 Good News Translation).

In spite of earth and hell combining against him, being thirsty, forsaken, and in agonizing pain, Christ COMPLETED the work his Father had sent him to accomplish. Just as he did not abandon his Father's work, we can be confident he will not abandon us.

7

## CHRIST'S SEVENTH STATEMENT

Let's highlight two different words here. First, the word "father". In Luke, the very first words we hear Jesus speak are when he's 12 years old at the temple: His parents said:

"Why did you leave us?" and Jesus says:

"Didn't you know I need to be about my father's business?" (Luke 2:49)

Then the very last words he says in mortality in Luke are also about his father. This shows us from beginning to end, Christ is focused on doing his father's will.

Another key word in this statement is I. This personal pronoun indicates the Savior's personal agency—he willingly gave up his life (see John 10:17-18).

In this statement we see Christ choosing TO GIVE HIMSELF, completely to God. DO WE DO THE SAME?

As we collectively think about Christ's seven statements from the cross in terms of a healing, a human, and a divine Jesus, some of us might wonder,

**"WHICH IS THE REAL JESUS?"**

It is the SUFFERING one, the FORGIVING one, the POWERFUL one!" and the point is that they all are.

Christ is 100% the suffering Jesus, 100% the healing Messiah, and 100% the all-powerful Christ

Remember that the Savior began his definition of his gospel by saying:

*"My father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all [people] unto me"* (3 Nephi 27:14)

The Savior personally defined his greatest act of love as his death for us—He is both the LIVING and the LOVING Christ.

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all to help **F I N D** Jesus' Principles

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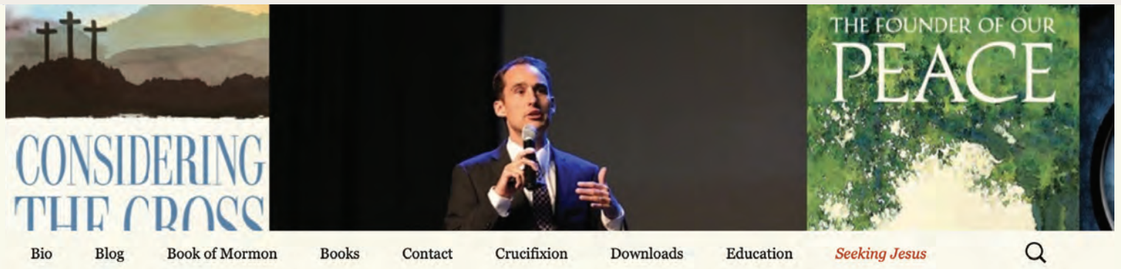


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