

If It Dies

Jesus offers hope to those who seek Him.

JOHN 12:20-33



...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...nim, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.
...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...sons: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. ¹⁰I go to prepare a place for you.
...¹¹And if I go and prepare a place for you, ¹²I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ¹³where I am, *there* ye may be also.
...¹⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.
...JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
...THE LIFE
...¹⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
...not whither thou goest; and how can we
...know the way?
...¹⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ¹⁷the way,
...the truth, and ¹⁸the life: ¹⁹no man cometh
...unto the Father, but by me.
...²⁰If ye had known me, ye should have
...known my Father also: and from henceforth
...ye know him, and have seen him.
...²¹Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the

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Share about your favorite fruit. What steps are required for you to enjoy that piece of fruit?

Most of us have a favorite fruit. At some point, a seed was planted that led to the producing of that fruit. While the seed may look nothing like the fruit, it sacrificed itself in producing the plant or tree that led to the piece of fruit we enjoy. Unless the seed “died,” it could not have taken root and produced growth. Even so, Jesus predicted He had to die to provide eternal life.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Jesus came not only as Messiah of the Jews but Savior of the world. While He primarily ministered among the Jews, Jesus made it clear that God also loves the Gentiles who seek and serve Him. When some God-fearing Greeks wanted to meet Jesus, the event triggered Jesus’s proclamation of His impending death. As His hour approached, He again explained what was about to happen. As He often did, Jesus used metaphors and symbols to teach. He pointed out that a seed had to die to produce life.

Jesus’s analogy of dying to live not only applied to Him, but also to anyone who followed Him. Some people might try to preserve their ways of life rather than die to self and come after Him. In doing so, they would lose the opportunity for greater, eternal life. In contrast, Jesus was willing to yield His life to glorify the Father and provide salvation for believers. His death would result in drawing people to Himself for God’s glory. Just as some Greeks had been attracted to Jesus, even so His death on the cross would bring countless others to Him.

Using another metaphor, Jesus described Himself as the light of the world. He urged His followers to believe in the light and walk in the light. Addressing His earthly life, Jesus warned that the light would only be with them for a short while. They should take advantage of His presence to grow stronger in their faith and to put that faith into practice as children of the light.

Unfortunately, in keeping with Isaiah’s prophecies, many people were blind to the light and refused to believe. Some of the people who heard Jesus believed in Him but were reluctant to do so openly for fear of the religious leaders. They desired the approval of people rather than laying down their lives for Christ.

JOHN 12:20-33

20 Now some **Greeks**^A were among those who went up to worship at the festival. **21** So they came to **Philip**,^B who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.” **22** Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. **23** Jesus replied to them, “The **hour**^C has come for the **Son of Man**^D to be **glorified**.^E **24** Truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. **25** The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. **26** If anyone serves me, he must follow me. Where I am, there my servant also will be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. **27** Now my soul is troubled. What should I say — Father, save me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour. **28** Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” **29** The crowd standing there heard it and said it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” **30** Jesus responded, “This voice came, not for me, but for you. **31** Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. **32** As for me, if I am **lifted up**^F from the earth I will draw all people to myself.” **33** He said this to indicate what kind of death he was about to die.

Key Words

- A. Synonymous with “Gentiles.” These religious outsiders revered the God of Israel and had come to Jerusalem to worship during Passover.
- B. The Greeks probably approached Philip because he was one of only two disciples who had a Greek name.
- C. The predetermined time of Jesus’s sacrificial death on the cross had come.
- D. Messianic title based on Daniel 7:13-14. Jesus often used this term in reference to Himself.
- E. The Greek word *doxazo*, meaning “magnificence,” “excellence,” “preeminence,” or “majesty.” Combined with the Greek word *logos* (meaning “word”), we get our English word “doxology.”
- F. Jesus’s crucifixion. Jesus would be lifted up to bring eternal life to all who believe in Him (see also Numbers 21:8-9; John 3:14-15).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. INTRODUCED

(JOHN 12:20-22)

Believers can introduce others to Jesus.

What makes a person approachable?

How does our personal identity serve to point others to Jesus?

2. DIES

(JOHN 12:23-26)

Following Jesus has costs and rewards.

How was Jesus glorified through His death, burial, and resurrection? How was this contrary to what people expected in the Messiah?

3. GLORIFIED

(JOHN 12:27-28)

Hope is found in faithfully following the Father.

How does the struggle Jesus faced help believers faithfully follow God?

4. DRAWS

(JOHN 12:29-33)

Jesus draws those seeking Him to the cross.

How does the death of Jesus on the cross produce judgment and victory? How does the cross draw people today?

APPLY THE TEXT

As a group create a list of people who are far from God. Pray for the people listed and for opportunities to share with them.

What other actions can the group take to introduce others to Jesus?

KEY DOCTRINE: Salvation

Salvation is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. (See Matthew 1:21; Ephesians 2:8-9.)

BIBLE SKILL: Dig deeper into the usage of key words or phrases.

Examine Jesus's reference to His hour as He responded to His mother. (John 2:4) Notice the difference between Jesus's reference to "My hour" and "the hour" in John 4:21-23. Consider how the early failures of Jesus's enemies related to the fact that His hour had not yet arrived. (John 7:30). Read John 13:1 to see another description of Jesus's hour. What changed to indicate Jesus's hour finally arrived in John 12:23?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 12:32. What do we mean when we say we want to “lift up Jesus”?

This isn't the first time Jesus has talked about being lifted up. Way back in John 3, Jesus told Nicodemus that just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (Numbers 21:9), Jesus Himself would be lifted up in order that whoever believed in Him would have eternal life (John 3:1-16).

What double meaning does Jesus's statement “If I am lifted up” have?

Jesus made this statement immediately after some Greeks had asked Philip to introduce them to Jesus. Even though Jesus was the King of Israel (John 12:13), He emphasized that when He is lifted up from the earth He will draw all people to Himself—not just the Jews. The death He was about to die on the cross would be for the Jews and Greeks alike.

Discuss what this verse tells us about our obligation to share the gospel. How do we lift Jesus up in our own lives? To whom do we lift Him up?

Write “Lift Him UP!” on a piece of tape, and tape it above your door, high enough that you have to jump to touch it. Tap the tape on your way out the door every morning.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 12:20-22

Consider Philip and Andrew's role in helping other people see Jesus.

Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem attracted the attention of the entire city. The capital was filled with people for the Passover festival, including some Greeks. The text does not specify why these Greeks chose to approach Philip. Essentially, they needed someone to introduce them to Jesus, and Philip may have been available in the moment. They may have approached Philip because he had a Greek name or because they knew he was from Bethsaida. Many of its residents reflected a Greek rather than Jewish influence. Philip told Andrew, who was also from Bethsaida (and the only other disciple with a Greek name), about the men's request. Both men were known for bringing people to Jesus. Philip had introduced Nathanael to Christ, and Andrew told his brother, Simon, about finding the Messiah (John 1:41-45). Together, these two disciples alerted Jesus to the Greeks' desire to see Him.

Sometimes divine appointments intersect in daily life, offering opportunities to tell people about Jesus. Other times, we may intentionally seek people who need to be saved. In every situation, the Holy Spirit can use us to help others know Christ and be born again.

What might make you more approachable to others? What can you do to point others to Jesus?

Day 2: John 12:23

Underline the word "glorified."

News of the Gentiles' request triggered something in Jesus. It elicited an announcement that the hour had come for Him to die for the whole world. The word *hour* represented the culmination of Jesus's life purpose. Just as His birth occurred at the perfect time in God's plan (Galatians 4:4), His death would also take place according to the Father's will (Acts 2:23). For Jesus to say the hour had come meant He was not passively subjected to the circumstances. Jesus would be glorified through His death.

Most people would not link glory with death on a cross. In the eyes of the world, Jesus's death was inglorious. But He understood the spiritual dimensions behind the cross. Certainly, Jesus would be glorified at the resurrection, but He also knew that through His atoning sacrifice the Son of Man would be glorified.

How was Jesus glorified through His death, burial, and resurrection?

Day 3: John 12:24-26

Highlight each occurrence of the word “life” in verse 25.

Jesus presented the metaphor of planting a seed in verse 24 then moved to the application. He wanted the disciples to understand a vital spiritual truth. If a person “loves his life,” he will “lose it.” This phrase describes people caring more about their earthly lives, including worldly pleasures, than about serving God. When Jesus spoke of someone loving or hating his life, He was referring to a life dictated and governed by one’s ego, whims, self-interests, and desires. In another context, Jesus described the necessity of denying oneself and following Him (Luke 9:23). Jesus went further and said anyone not willing to do so was not worthy of Him (Matthew 10:38).

Jesus was nearing the cross; to follow Him at this point meant being willing to die a martyr’s death. That death, though, would be followed by the eternal rewards of being with Jesus and being honored by the Father. Discipleship involves casting aside personal desire for the honor of serving Jesus. Some believers may experience physical death as a result, but all Christians must die to self so they can live in Christ.

How have you personally experienced the spiritual truth that loving your life leads to losing it and losing your life leads to gaining it?

Day 4: John 12:27-28

Reflect on Jesus’s use of the word “Father” in that hour.

Jesus came as God in human flesh—as much human as if He were not divine and as much divine as if He were not human. Verse 27 is a reminder of that truth. He had just announced the hour had arrived; His death was near. Jesus had surely seen crucified bodies hanging on Roman crosses. He had witnessed the barbaric torture and resultant agony. Thus, for Jesus to say “my soul is troubled” had to be an understatement. Despite the anguish, however, this was why He came. The words of verse 27 reflect the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39). The prayer reflects both the dread Jesus felt and His steadfastness in His obedience to the Father, understanding He was to be sacrificed for our sins (John 10:17-18; 1 John 4:10).

Looking back on these events, believers see the Father brought glory to His name through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Son. Jesus was not crucified because God was angry, dissatisfied, or disappointed with Jesus. The crucifixion was the means through which Jesus would seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Just as Jesus fulfilled His purpose on earth by obediently glorifying the Father, believers magnify the Heavenly Father through their faithfulness.

How does the struggle Jesus faced help you faithfully follow God?

Day 5: John 12:29-33

Compare John 12:32 to John 3:14-16.

Jesus did not need to hear the audible voice of God to know the Father heard His prayer. The voice was for the benefit of others who heard it. They recognized that the brief prayer Jesus uttered had resulted in a divine response from the sky. That thunderous response itself was a declaration that this was to be a pivotal and powerful moment. For Jesus, the crucial moment had arrived, and it was now.

When Jesus declared that “the ruler of this world” would be cast out, He was speaking of Satan himself. The enemy was to be defeated—now. How was the enemy going to be defeated? Jesus would be lifted up from the earth. He had used similar terminology when alluding to the lifting of the bronze snake (John 3:14-15). Jesus was speaking about His crucifixion, the kind of death he was about to die.

In saying He would “draw all people” to Himself, Jesus was not teaching that all people would automatically or eventually be saved—even without coming to faith in Christ. Instead, Jesus was saying that God was calling all people to Him—Jews and Greeks, Romans and Gentiles, male and female, young and old, rich and poor. He came to be the Savior for all. (See John 1:12.)

How does the death of Jesus on the cross produce judgment and victory? How does the cross draw people to Jesus today?

APPLY THE TEXT

What actions can you take to lift up Jesus? In what areas do you need to strengthen your witness for Him? How can you strengthen those areas?

