

## BE A BRINGER

“40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus....” John 1:40-42a

A bringer makes one touch each week by investing and inviting someone to Christ and church.

Name three people you will pray for their salvation this week:

## PRAYER REQUESTS FOR THE WEEK

“Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you;....” I Samuel 12:23a

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# At The Cross

With People Who Were There

GROWTH GUIDE



Handout: 03/11/18

Study: 03/18/18

## The Criminal At The Cross

One of the most excruciating experiences in life is to be left out, to be unwanted. I suspect that the thief on the cross knew the pain of rejection. I base that on the fact that he is called both a criminal and a “robber” (Mark) in the gospels. We also have his own admission that he deserved execution. So I don’t think we would be far off to imagine him as a misfit, a person abandoned and unloved, a person whose life of crime reflected a loveless, unloved life. My guess is that there was no one on Golgotha to mourn his death, to support him on his cruel deathbed. My guess is that he lived his life believing that no-one would want anything to do with him, especially someone who, unlike him, “had done nothing wrong” (Luke 23:41).

Imagine then his shocked reaction when Jesus looked him in the eye and said, “you will be with me.” You and me? How could that possibly be? Like a kid always picked last, inexplicably chosen first for once, he must have looked at Jesus in disbelief. You and me? A king and a con man? A ruler and a robber? A savior and a sinner? Together forever? You and me?

Jesus must have received that reaction time and again during his life, as despised tax collectors and prostitutes and lepers felt his love and acceptance. How many others before and how many others since have been shocked to hear that Jesus wanted to be with them? How many of us have not thought: You and me? In paradise?

And yet, that is precisely the heart of the good news: that there is a God who wants to be with us. That good news is clearly heard in the promise of the coming Messiah quoted in the Christmas story: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel – which means ‘God with us.’” (Matthew 1:23)

Like the criminal, we are shocked at the news that God is more than willing to stoop down to us. But we should never forget that in the original paradise, God created humans not just to tend the garden, but to enjoy fellowship with him. You get a strong sense of that in Genesis 3:8,9 where we read: “Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:8,9)

So here’s the thing: God created us for fellowship with him. God’s goal is to be “with us” again. And God’s agent of reconciliation is Jesus. The phrase “you will be with me” is what the Bible is all about, the reason Jesus came to live and die.

Looking at it from our point of view, like the criminal we should be totally shocked. Why would Jesus want to spend time with me! Looking at it from the Lord’s point of view, however, we should not be shocked at all. He wants nothing more than to walk with us in the garden in the cool of the day as he sought to do that fateful day when Adam and Eve hid in fear.

I will put it as simply as I possibly can: Jesus loved the criminal on the cross and wanted to be with him. And Jesus loves you and wants to be with you.

(by Rev. Peter Slofstra)

## KEY VERSE

Luke 23:43

*And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."  
NKJV*

## WEEKLY READINGS

**Monday: Luke 23:32-43**

### Introduction

1. What reactions towards Jesus do we read in this passage?
2. Describe when you realized for first time that Jesus was your Savior. If you haven't come to that belief yet, what are some things that are stopping you?

**Tuesday: Luke 5:31-32; Romans 6:23**

### Condition of the Criminals

3. How would you describe the spiritual state of the criminals?
4. Apart from Jesus, what did their future hold?

**Wednesday: Luke 23:40-42; Romans 10:9-10**

### Conversion of the Criminal

5. One of the criminals received salvation during his crucifixion. What things did he do or say that showed a changed heart?
6. The two criminals probably had similar life experiences and were facing the same excruciating death. Why do you think one repented and accepted Jesus and the other rejected Him?

**Thursday: Romans 5:6-11**

### Compassion of the Savior

7. What are some ways that Jesus showed compassion during his crucifixion?
8. How do you think the repentant man on the cross felt when he heard Jesus' words in Luke 23:43?

**Friday: Revelation 3:20; Psalm 16:11; Genesis 3:8-9**

### Jesus Wants You To Be With Him

9. How often do you think about Heaven? How do you feel about being in Paradise one day with Jesus?
10. Jesus told the man on the cross that he would be "with Me" in Paradise that day. What a great day that will be for those who believe to be with Jesus in Heaven! But we have also access to him today. We don't have to wait until the end of our lives to be "with Him". How would you rate your relationship with Jesus?
11. Who in your life needs to hear the good news that Salvation is available today in Christ Jesus?