



EVERLASTING

JOHN 3:16

Everlasting: Redeemed

Large Group Talk 3

Objective: Many students have already heard the “what” of Jesus’ death and resurrection. They could tell you that he died on a cross and rose again three days later. They might even be able to explain that Jesus is both God and a human being. But it’s easy to lose track of the “why” behind these “whats.” This lesson will help students understand the reason Jesus did what he did. It will explore our response to his act of love and sacrifice so students will know how they can be saved from sin and death.

Introduction:

Ask: Why do you think little kids always ask “why” so much?

Say Something Like: *When it comes to faith, the “why” question is soo important. Many people know the “whats” when it comes to Jesus. He was born in a manger, he died on a cross, he rose again. But when we stop at “what”— we miss the whole point. The power comes from asking, “Why?” And that’s what we’re going to talk about today.*

Whether you’ve been in church all your life, or this is the first time you’ve done anything with Christians, there’s a good chance you’ve heard of Jesus. You likely even know that Christians believe he died. Maybe you know that Easter is the celebration of Jesus coming back to life. That gets talked about a lot.

*But the key for today’s study is going beyond **what** happened to understand **why** it happened. Because that’s the part that can change everything. Why does someone’s death 2,000 years ago make in our lives today? The answer to that can be found the book of John. This passage starts with a verse you might have heard over and over before, but pay careful attention to how it fits into the larger context of what John says.*

Read John 3:16–21:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the

Large Group Talk 3: Redeemed

name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

Say Something Like: *There are lots of pieces to this passage, and it can be easy to move too quickly through it to a simple "what" conclusion like, "Jesus died for us." That's true, of course, but John is also interested in telling us about the "why." Let's walk through three key truths in this passage about the power of why Jesus lived, died, and rose again.*

Teaching: Redeemed

1. Why Jesus Came

Say Something Like: *This passage begins with "For God so loved the world." You learned all about God's love for us and the rest of his creation in your first Large Group lesson. Immediately after those words we hear the reason Jesus came into the world: to fix a huge problem, to defeat a great evil. And that's what your second Large Group lesson was about. Human beings are in trouble.*

This is because all of us, even the best of us, are sinful. We rebel against God's rule and try to assume command of our own lives. This act of mutiny has a consequence. Eventually the horrible effects of sin—broken relationship with God and the suffering that goes with it—become permanent. Because of sin, we all die. God gives us life and sustains us, and when we turn away from him, we turn toward death and eternal separation from God.

Ask: Based on this, what is the great villain Jesus came to defeat?

Say Something Like: *People alive when Jesus was on earth thought a savior would come to save them from an oppressive government. But Jesus actually came to save people from themselves. He came to save a dying world—like a sinking ship. He didn't come to reward those who were the most religious. He didn't come to honor a few people who were doing things right (because no one was). He came to rescue those of us already living in sin and headed toward death.*

That's the answer to the big "why": Jesus lived, died, and rose again so we wouldn't perish, because we are all helpless against the power of our own sin.

2. How We Can Be Saved

Say Something Like: *John says that while Jesus was the light, men hated the light and loved darkness. Jesus wasn't exactly embraced with open arms. He came to save us*

from sin and death, but we do the same thing Adam and Eve did after the first sin: we hide.

Jesus came to save everyone hiding in the dark by shining a light on the sins we're trying to hide. After all, dentists can't fix cavities if they can't see them in a dark mouth, and our sins can't be forgiven if we don't admit they're there. Jesus offers people a way out of the darkness. Sadly, many people won't admit they need saving.

According to this passage, the way to be saved is simple but not easy: faith. We must believe that we are sinful and need to be saved, and that Jesus, the Son of God, is the only one who can save us. That's where it gets hard. Because today many do not think they need to be saved. Or they think they can save themselves by doing enough good things to balance the bad things they've done.

Remember that sin isn't about breaking a few rules—if that were the case, we'd be okay if we just started following the rules again. Sin is about carrying out a mutiny against God and replacing him as the Lord of our lives. That mutiny comes with a high cost: death. God was upfront about that from the very beginning: "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil [trying to become like God], for when you eat from it you will certainly die" (Gen. 2:17). Our only escape from the power of death and eternal separation from God was if someone took our punishment for us. And that's exactly what Jesus did by dying on the Cross and rising again. He defeated sin and death once and for all.

When we place our faith in Jesus and start following him, we acknowledge that he is the rightful Lord of our lives. Then we are adopted back into God's family. The world is dying, but because of fear or doubt or pride, many miss their chance to be rescued.

That doesn't have to be you. Today, even right now, all it takes are two steps. They are difficult steps, but there are only two!

First, you have to genuinely believe and admit that you need of a savior. Jesus came to save sinners from death, and you are one of those sinners. So am I, and so is every person who has ever lived.

Next, you have to do the really radical thing and believe in Jesus. Follow him. Trust him. Accept that God created you and loves you. Make him Lord of your life. His heart breaks because of what sin does in, to, and through you. And that's why he came into the world as a man named Jesus to die so you can live the way you were made to.

3. What Changes?

Say Something Like: *That covers why Jesus came into the world and how we can be saved by truly trusting in Jesus and following him. Now let's think about how our lives change because of this. Jesus is referred to again and again as "the light."*

Jesus is the light in our lives in two ways. Like this flashlight, Jesus pierces our darkness and reveals what we'd rather keep hidden. And when we start following him as the light of our lives, he shows us the path we should walk.

That's just how Jesus works—he is the light and when we get close to Jesus, we don't get to keep things in the dark. As long as we keep those things to ourselves, we can't offer them up to Jesus, who is died for them on the Cross. That's why he brings everything into the so we can give them to him.

He is also a light that shows us a path. Jesus lived a perfect life. And he taught us what it means to be fully human. We are at our best when we live the way he taught us. Remember that heavy bundle of guilt and shame (from the last Large Group Talk) that sin forces into our lives? Jesus takes those things away.

When we let go of our fear and pride and humble ourselves before Jesus by being honest about our sin and putting our hope in him, Jesus responds like the men from that clip. He forgives us entirely, removes our guilt and shame, and embraces us into his family. That's the power of the overwhelming love of God for his children.

Putting It All Together:

Say Something Like: *Maybe you came into this talk already knowing what Jesus did. Maybe you already knew that you had a sin problem and needed to believe in Jesus. But maybe this was your first time understanding why Jesus did what he did. Either way, it all comes down to this: Jesus came into the world to save you, to forgive you, and to welcome you back into his family. He gives you the opportunity to reject the false idols and lesser things you've let take control of your life so he can sit on your life's throne. He offers that salvation to you today, for the first time or the thousandth. He calls you simply to believe in him. To trust him. To let him bring light to the darkest places in your life.*

Today, let Jesus shine in your heart and bring out what needs to be given up to him. Let him light the path before you, calling you to live according to his truth.

[Speaker note: The following questions will be discussed deeper in the small group lesson]

Question 1: Why do you think some people prefer the darkness over the light of Jesus?

Question 2: Think of one thing you've kept to yourself instead of giving it over to Jesus. How would you feel if that thing were removed from your shoulders and tossed away?

Looking Forward: Let the students know that the next lesson will look at life after we've started following Jesus. Be sure to give them any instructions they might need to go from here.