

What To Do When You Are Nailed To A Cross

John 19:30, Luke 23:46, Matthew 27:45-46, John 19:26-27, Luke 23:39-43, Luke 23:34

Slide 1

Today's helpful hint from that little book, *Worst Case Scenarios*, is How to Survive a Poisonous Snake Attack.

1. Wash the bite with soap and water as soon as you can.
2. Immobilize the bitten area and keep it lower than the heart.
3. Get medical help as soon as possible
4. Immediately wrap a bandage two to four inches above the bite to help slow the venom.

These instructions may or may not be any help since we do not have an abundance of poisonous snakes here in Fort Worth, but you never know.

There are a lot of worse case scenarios we could discuss, but for those watching the events unfold that Friday when Jesus was crucified, that must have been their Worst-Case scenario.

It's unlikely that any one of them could have imagined their story ending like this.

Even Judas, the one who betrayed Jesus, couldn't have imagined that Jesus would've ended up nailed to a cross like a common criminal.

Jesus had been arrested in the garden, handed from the High Priests to Pilate, to King Herod and back to Pilate.

So Pilate, in an effort to appease the crowd that been stirred into a frenzy by the religious leaders, had Jesus beaten and flogged.

Yet, that did little to satisfy the blood lust of the crowd. So, even knowing it was wrong, Pilate gave the crowd for what they asked.

We read the account in Matthew 27:24, *“When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!”*

With that, Pilate did what he knew he shouldn’t have done, he surrendered an innocent man over to a blood thirsty mob.

When he turned and walked away, he probably thought the story was over. Little did he know that this wasn’t the end of the story, it was the beginning.

If we keep reading in Luke, we find these words in Luke 23:33, *“When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left.”*

They nailed Him to the cross. I suspect that those who had conspired to see it happen, along with those who had actually taken part in His crucifixion, probably thought this would be where the story ended.

Little did they know that this wasn’t the end of the story, it was just the beginning. They just expected Him to die.

But what happened during those six hours that Jesus spent on the cross? We don’t know everything since those six hours were telescoped down to a few dozen verses between the four gospels.

It’s through those Words that He spoke during that time, that we get a glimpse into the heart of Jesus. Were there other words, other statements? We don’t know.

I suspect there were, but it's useless to speculate, because these are the words of Jesus that we do have from those six hours.

So worst case scenario, What If You Found Yourself Nailed to a Cross? I don't know what I'd do. I doubt you know what you'd do.

But through these words we get a glimpse of what was going through Jesus' mind while He was dying; what concerned Him and about whom He was thinking.

A few years ago, I came across a book entitled, *Last Words of Notable People*. In this book, there are over 3500 examples of peoples' last or dying words.

From the words of American author Edward Paul Abbey, who's dying words were, "*I did what I could.*" To those of Swiss Reformer, Ulrich Zwingli, who died saying, "*They can kill the body but not the soul.*"

What I discovered is that we usually die the way we lived. There are very few surprises at the end.

When Marie Antoinette was being led to the guillotine she accidentally stepped on the executioner's foot and said, "*Pardon me, sir. I meant not to do it.*"

I'd suspect for a person to apologize to their executioner, that was who she was.

Groucho Marx's dying words were, "*Die my dear? Why that is the last thing I'd do.*" While, Sigmund Freud's were, "*Now it is nothing but torture and makes no sense anymore.*"

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So, the first words that Christ spoke from the cross, are found in Luke 23:34a, *“Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”* These words revealed that He was God.

In the book of Mark there’s a neat story about Jesus healing a paralyzed man. Jesus is teaching in a house, most likely Peter’s home.

You might remember the story; the house was packed, and many people weren’t able to get in, so they stood outside as close to the door and windows they could get.

About that time, a group arrives carrying a paralyzed man on a stretcher. Realizing they weren’t going to get through the crowd, they go to the roof, break through, and lower their friend in front of Jesus.

Mark 2:5, *“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”* Did you catch what happened?

When the stretcher reached the ground, the first thing Jesus said was *“Your sins are forgiven.”* That really irritated the religious leaders who were there.

Mark 2:6-7, *“Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”*

Now, they weren’t wrong. When we sin, we sin against God.

Even when our sin directly impacts other people, whether because we’ve lied to them, stole from them, or cheated on them, we’re sinning against God, and that has consequences.

Listen to what Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 59:2, *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”*

We need to ask forgiveness from those we hurt since they are the only ones who can forgive us for what we’ve done to them personally, only God can forgive us for being sinners.

Remember, *“A dog isn’t a dog because he barks, he barks because he’s a dog.”* We aren’t sinners because we sin, we sin because we’re sinners, and only God can forgive us those sins.

So, Jesus answered His critics:

Mark 2:8-12, *“Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”*

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When Jesus looked down from the cross and said, *“Father Forgive them.”* He was asserting His position as God. But understand, that within forgiveness there’s God’s part, but there’s also our part.

John reminds us in 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

Then later we read Peter’s words in Acts 3:19a, *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.”*

We do our part, which is, we confess our sin. We acknowledge we have wronged God, and we repent, in other words, we turn away from our sin and God does His part, He forgives us.

Let's get back to Friday. John 19:28, *"Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty.'"*

The first statement revealed that Jesus was God, here His Words reveal that He was human.

We sometimes get so caught up in Jesus' divinity that we forget His humanity. Listen to some of things that are recorded about Jesus.

Mark 11:12, *"The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry."*

Remember when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, the first temptation was to turn the rocks into bread, which was to satisfy His hunger.

In the story of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman we read in John 4:5-7, *"So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?'"*

The story begins with Jesus resting because He was tired and then asking for a drink of water, presumably because He was thirsty. So, while we don't think about it, Jesus ate, drank, and slept. Just like us.

That's the great mystery of the incarnation, that the God Who created everything, could become part of what He created.

Philippians 2:5-8, *“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!”*

In order for Jesus to take the price of our sin upon Himself, He had to become like us. He wasn't just God taking on a human form, He was God Who was born as a child, and experienced what we experience.

From the frustration of being a child who can't do everything they want to do, to the angst of being a teenager, thinking his parents didn't understand him, to the temptations that would come His way as a young adult. Jesus was fully human.

If His temptations and hungers were limited to hunger for food then Hebrews 14 would be a lie.

Hebrews 4:14-15, *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”*

It doesn't say he faced some of the same testings, but all of the same testings. His words in Luke 23 also reveal He was Savior.

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Luke 23:39-43, *“One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don't you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”*

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

In Luke's gospel we read about Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus the tax collector, and how the people were kind of cranky that He would associate with someone like a corrupt tax collector.

Usually in the Bible, when people spoke of tax collectors, they added the words... "and other sinners."

It was here that Jesus defined His purpose for coming. Luke 19:10, *"Jesus said, "For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."*

Here He is, at the end of His life, hanging between two criminals, and He still remembers His purpose in coming. That's the reality, God's grace is always there.

Death bed conversions are always interesting. Many people want the assurance that their loved one, who never had time for God while they were alive, will experience God's grace in their last moments.

Here's the promise, it's given to us in John 1:12, *"Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"*

Aren't you glad that there're no conditions laid out here? But to all who believe, whether it be a thief on a cross or a teenager from Fort Worth, he gives the right to become a child of God.

It wasn't just people's souls that Jesus was thinking about on the cross, though.

We're told in John 19:26-27, *"When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home."*

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Conclusion

Jesus' Words reveals that He was Mary's Son. I said earlier that often who we are at our death reveals a lot about who we were in our life.

Jesus performed His first miracle at the wedding in Cana because His mother asked Him to.

We don't have a lot of insight into what Jesus' life was like before His ministry began, but who He was as a man was shaped by how He was raised by Mary and Joseph.

As he looked down and saw His mother, who gave up her reputation, her plans, and her future to raise the Son of God, He wanted to make sure that she was cared for.

So, he entrusts her into the care of one of His best friends, John. Later He'll entrust the church into Peter's care, but right now, on the cross it's Mary of whom He's thinking.

But he wasn't just thinking of his mother, Matthew 27:46b records His plea, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* He wasn't only the son of Mary, here His words reveal that He was also God's Son.

Again, we catch a glimpse of Jesus' humanity, as He cries out to God, "Why? Why?"

Jesus knew what was going on. He knew the why, and He knew the how. But along with His divinity was His humanity, and He was hurting.

Crucifixion was one of the most painful means of execution. It's actually from where the word excruciating comes.

As Jesus hung, suspended between heaven and earth, He cried out in agony to the only one Who could help, but Who hasn't. *"My God, my God, why have You abandoned me?"*

When we question God, we're acknowledging that He's in control. That he can do something.

If you're on a business call, and you aren't getting satisfaction, what do you do? You ask to speak to a supervisor. To someone who can correct the problem, to someone with authority.

In Jesus' humanity, He was calling out to the only one He knew had the answers, My God, My God. Abba Father. In his divinity, Jesus knew the plan, in His humanity all he knew was how much it hurt.

Then the story of the cross finishes with Jesus' last two statements that are found in John and Luke's accounts.

John 19:30, *"It is finished! Father"* and Luke 23:46, *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."* With those words He breathed his last.

So, when the end had come, Jesus entrusted everything into His Father's hands. That was a decision that He made for you and for me. Now, He could've stopped it at any time.

His prayer could've been, *"You know I think I've had enough of this. I don't think humanity is worth saving, Father send the angels and let's put a stop to this,"* but He didn't.

The reality of that Friday is summed up in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

Whatever the worst-case scenario may become in your life, I pray you may be able to say, *“Father, I may not understand it, I may not like it, but I trust You.”*