



INTRODUCTION - Week 1

As we march toward Easter, our theme in worship is “Abandoned.” We believe feeling abandon is a universal experience. Even Jesus knew what it was like to be abandoned when on the cross he cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. “Abandoned” is a strong word. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word?
2. Most of us don’t immediately think of ourselves as being “abandoned.” But all of us experience it—sometimes subtly. Maybe you’ve felt abandoned when:
 - A friend betrays you or chooses to move on from you to a new crowd.
 - Someone says something on social media you don’t agree with.
 - A coach sees more potential in someone other than you.
 - As a son or daughter, your parents want so badly for you to succeed that it feels like all they care about is your ACT, ERA, PPG or net worth.
 - Struggles hit your marriage.
 - A loved one passes.
 - Your kids grow up, leave home and get busy with their own lives.
 - A job or career ends and the company goes on without you. You are replaceable.
 - Cancer or illness strikes you or a loved one.

Can you relate to any of these above? What is your “abandoned” story?

3. **Read Mark 15:33-37.**
4. Jesus cried out in the Aramaic language: “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani” A more concise translation is “My God, My God, why have you left me? Why have you abandoned me?” What does it mean to you that Jesus, God’s son, felt abandoned—abandoned by God, no less? Does this trouble you?
5. Does it bring you any comfort to know that Jesus knows what you and I experience when we feel abandoned? Why or why not?
6. **Read Mark 15:37-38.** What was the very first thing that happened the moment Jesus died?
7. In Jesus’ day, God’s people believed that God actually lived in the temple in Jerusalem. In the front of the temple, a huge curtain separated the people from where God lived. It was a constant reminder that humanity is unfit for the presence of God. Our imperfect and messy lives need to be separated from God. Only the high priest was permitted to pass beyond this curtain once each year. The moment Jesus died the very first thing to happen was that the curtain was miraculously torn in two. What does that mean to you? Why might this be an important detail in the story?
8. During his message Hans shared that when it comes to God, “if we believe we are forsaken, we are mistaken.” Is this difficult for you to believe? Why or why not?

9. What is one thing that you could do for one another this week to remind each other that you are never forgotten, left behind or alone?

MOVING FORWARD

Daily we are bombarded with messages that seem to imply we are to do life alone. Pull yourself up by the bootstraps. Relying on others is a sign of weakness. And social media, that seems to suggest I'm the only one who doesn't live that picture perfect life, doesn't help matters. All this can leave us feeling alone. Depending on the study, somewhere between 30-40% of Americans feel lonely on a regular basis. That's not what God intended. When we gather in groups where we can share life together, and support one another — like Connect Groups — we are reminded that we are mistaken if we are feeling forsaken. God created us to do life together!