



And cast your eyes to the wheat field, to the stalks swaying in the wind. Will they simply waver through the summer til the autumn of their lives? Or will they be gathered and crushed, so that they, being few, may be planted in new soil and yield a harvest of plenty? It seems to go against every instinct—against our need for survival, and against common sense—to go against the grain. It’s also the way of the cross. But, then again, so is resurrection.

These questions are intended to deepen your experience of the message. Use them for your personal or family study time, or with an open Bible as you share the good news with your neighbor.

Group Ice-Breaker:

(1) What are some of your favorite stories of great sacrifice?

(2) Sing or read “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded” to prepare your minds for a discussion about the death of Christ.

**FIGHTING AGAINST DEATH.** Reflect on some of the tragic events of this week, or in your recent memory. Life is valuable and precious. List ways we seek to save and protect life. **Follow up:** Read **Mark 8:34**. In a culture like Jesus grew up in, death (even tragic death) was a routine part of life. How would this verse have been understood?

**PREPARING TO DIE.** Read **John 12:24-26**. Describe a first or second-century worship setting (in the caves of Rome, or in a house-church under severe persecution) and discuss this definition of a Sunday service: “a gathering of people preparing each other to die.” Follow up: Do you agree that we all die “for” something (either for others, ourselves, in pursuit of something, etc)? Discuss.

**THE WHEAT FIELD.** Read **John 12:24-26 again**. A “grain of wheat” refers to a harvestable amount of grain already sifted, where the heads have been broken down, divided up, and distributed. The alternative is wheat that stayed where it is planted until the autumn. Which wheat describes your life?

**WAY OF LIFE.** Read **1 Peter 2:21; Gal 6:14**. Nathan said “The cross is not simply the symbol of our religion; it is the shape of our lives.” List some practical ways the cross defines how we live. Where is the cross in our financial life, our entertainment, our friendships, and our future plans?

**RESURRECTION.** Read **1 Cor 15:36-44**. The cross only makes sense in the light of resurrection. Christians believe that we do not have to live as if we own our lives because God—who owns our lives—promises to give us back our lives, along with the harvest of righteousness that our sacrifice provides. Discuss how resurrection motivates us to live sacrificial lives. **Follow up:** Read **1 Cor 15:54**. How will death be swallowed up in victory?