

outcast

The Way of the Cross

A Disciple 13 Resource
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outcast

How to Use this Book

The Purpose

Throughout the message of the gospels we see Jesus time and again including those that society has rejected. He embraces lepers. He defends adulterers. He eats with tax collectors. He is the embodiment of a final place of refuge for the lost, the starving, the forsaken and the hurt. He will not reject or despise them. He takes them in.

Were we to talk about this theme within the gospels, there would be ample passages for us to read and study. Indeed, there are few times in Jesus' ministry with the crowds when he is doing anything but the very act of taking in the rejected. However, what is far more seldom talked about is the fact that Jesus, himself, was an outcast. *He* was rejected. *He* was despised. *He* was forsaken and lost.

This series will explore the idea that Jesus was an outcast and explore the ways in which we are called to be outcasts with him.

The Studies

Participants should come to each small group meeting with a Bible, ready to dive into the Word.

Use these Bible studies to direct your discussion times as a group. Feel free to modify the studies so that they work well for your group, adapting the questions or even adding in your own teaching elements. (You may, for example, choose to use a song or a movie clip with a study as an alternate intro activity.) Do whatever works best for your group as you explore the Word.

Close out each Bible study with a prayer.

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What is an Outcast?

the point

Everyone has been an outcast.

close, but no

- If someone tells you that close doesn't count, what are they saying? When is it true that close doesn't count?
- Tell about a time in your life when you felt like you were one step away from being where you needed to be—close, but not quite there.

rejected

During this four lesson series we'll be taking a look at the idea of being an outcast. Of course, we can't do that unless we know what it means to be an outcast. That's where we're going to start in this lesson.

- Tell about a time when you found yourself on the outside.
- What does it feel like to be rejected?
- What are some of the reasons why people are rejected and left out? What are some of the most common situations in which people are made into outcasts?
- Tell about a time when you pushed someone else to the outside.
- Define the word "outcast". What does an outcast's life look like? How do people treat him? How do people respond to her? What are some of the challenges that an outcast might face?
- Name some people from the Bible who were outcasts.
- When do you feel like an outcast? What do you do at those times?

the essence of an outcast

1. Outcasts have been rejected.

- Earlier you were asked to tell about what it feels like to be rejected. What did we conclude?
- What do we usually assume rejection means? What does rejection do to your self-image?

2. Outcasts are different and often misunderstood.

- It's frustrating to be misunderstood. To feel like no one really gets you. Have you ever felt that way? Describe the frustration you felt.
- Most of us really don't want to be different—why? Why is it so scary to us to stand out?

- What are some of the things that make outcasts you encounter on a regular basis stand out?

3. Outcasts are alone.

- This is the worst part of being an outcast. Being alone. There may be nothing in the world that's worse than being all alone. When do you feel the most alone?

Believe it or not, we've been describing some of the very traits that paint a clear picture of what Jesus' day-to-day life was like: rejected by the established religious rulers, misunderstood, even by his own disciples and alone to the point that God the Father would eventually turn his back on him.

Have you ever felt alone? Different? Rejected and despised? There is one who knows what that feels like. More than you know.

Close with a prayer.

outcast

The Divine Outcast

the point

Jesus was an outcast.

review

- What did we talk about last week?
- What does it mean to be an outcast?

the plan

Even long before Jesus was born, it was prophesied that he would be an outcast.

Read: Isaiah 53:2-3

It may seem odd, but it was God's plan from the very beginning that Jesus would be rejected. He was the divine Outcast. Now, it's true that early in Jesus' ministry there were many people who followed him and loved him, but the longer he preached, the fewer people followed him. In the end, even the twelve left him and he faced his death alone. The crowds that had once listened eagerly to his teachings now chanted for his death. The same people who had rushed to him for healing now pushed together to watch him die.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. There were plenty of times within Jesus' ministry when he was rejected...

rejected

Read: Mark 3:20-21 (rejected)

- Why would Jesus' family claim that he was crazy?
- How do you think this accusation affected the way the crowds saw Jesus? The way the Pharisees saw Jesus?
- How do you imagine Jesus felt when he heard that his own family was calling him crazy? How would you have felt?

Read: Mark 3:22 (misunderstood)

- This is the ultimate misunderstanding. In the last lesson we talk about how being misunderstood is part of being an outcast. What do you think Jesus felt as he heard this “religious authorities” come to such an awful conclusion about him?

Read: Mark 6:1-6 (alone)

- These are the people Jesus grew up around and here they are questioning him and disowning him. Why would they “take offense” at Jesus?
- Can you imagine having the very people who should know you best turn on you. How alone would you feel?
- Jesus’ apostles have witnessed all three of these rejections - Jesus’ family, the religious rulers and now the people in his hometown. If you had been one of Jesus’ disciples, what would you have been thinking?
- Why was it necessary for Jesus to be rejected? In other words, we know why Jesus had to die. He had to die so that we could be forgiven. But why did his life have to be so hard leading up to the cross? Why did he have to encounter so much pain and rejection?

Close with a prayer.

outcast

The Scapegoat

the point

Jesus was an outcast for us, because of us.

review

- What are the three elements of being an outcast?
- What situations did we read about Jesus being outcast in?

the scapegoat

Read: Leviticus 16:5-10; 20-22

We all know that Jesus died for our sins, and that makes him our sin offering, but Jesus was also our scapegoat. All our sins and rebellion were laid on his head. Just as Aaron was commanded to drive the scapegoat out away from the Israelites into the desert where it would die alone, so too Jesus was driven out away from everyone else until he found himself in a place where he would die alone.

what he carried

We're going to spend some time now reflecting some on what it meant for Jesus to bear our sins.

Read: Isaiah 53:2-6

- Why was it necessary for Jesus to take on our sins, our guilt and our shame? Why do you think God chose to redeem us this way?
- When Jesus was nailed to the cross, in some kind of supernatural way all the sins of everyone who had ever lived and ever would lived were also nailed to him. What do you think that was like for Jesus? What do you think he experienced in that moment?
- There is literally no kind of grief, shame, guilt, pain, confusion or hurt that you could feel that Jesus has not already felt. If you really believe that and accept that, how will that affect the way you pray? The way you confess to Him? The way you live out your life day to day?

our part in his rejection

Perhaps the hardest part of these four lessons will be the next few minutes. Our mistakes caused Jesus' pain. In that way, we are really the ones who have rejected Jesus and made him an outcast. But there's another way in which we reject him: Every time we fail to do his will, we reject his plan for us and reject him.

- 1. When we decide that our ways are better than his ways, we are calling him crazy, just as his family did.** We are asserting that he doesn't know what's he's talking about—that he must be out of his mind.
- 2. When we believe the lie that he doesn't really have our best interest at heart, we are accusing him of being evil, just like the Pharisees did.** We are claiming that he's not really as good as he says he is—that he's not love.
- 3. When we doubt his ability to work through us and in us, we are labeling him a fraud, just like the folks in his hometown did.** We are alleging that he's not as powerful as the Word testifies that he is—that he's not really the Lord of lords, the King of kings.

Who has made Jesus into an outcast? We have. We've rejected him. We've mocked him and scorned him. We've walked away from him. We do this every time we choose something else over him.

Lead the group in prayer, pausing in the middle to give everyone an opportunity to pray silently, confessing our role in rejecting Jesus and asking for his forgiveness. Close out the prayer by thanking him for his forgiveness and grace.

outcast

On the Outside

the point

We have been called to be outcasts.

review

- In one sentence, what is an outcast?
- How was Jesus an outcast? What forms of rejection did he face?
- What are some ways we reject Jesus? (*When we decide that our ways are better than his ways, when we believe the lie that he doesn't really have our best interest at heart, when we doubt his ability to work through us and in us.*)

your cross

Read: Mark 8:27-34

You and I have been invited into relationship with Jesus. Your relationship with him brings with it countless blessings, but it also brings with it hardships. You cannot know him and not also know rejection. To be one of His, you too must become an outcast.

Read: John 15:18-20

- Jesus says that the world would love us if we belonged to the world. What's he implying? In what ways do we not belong to the world?
- Jesus says the world hates us because he has called us out of the world. What does your life look like if you've been called out of the world? How will you stand out?
- We know how Jesus was persecuted—he was killed on a cross. How are we persecuted? What forms of persecution have you undergone? If you feel like you've never really been persecuted, what does that mean?

Read: Mark 8:34

- Our invitation into a relationship with Jesus carries with it the promise that we will become outcasts. We will have to carry a cross. In what ways will following Jesus make us outcasts? How do we carry our crosses?

the community of outcasts

- Becoming an outcast is scary. How can we encourage each other and lean on each other as we learn how to take on the role of an outcast?

Close by praying for each other in pairs.