The Way of the Cross
Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Who is one person who has a skill, ability, or character trait that amazes you? Explain.

2. What is one way someone has blessed you this year?

Read the following passage: Mark 8:27-38.

Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say I am?" This is an unusual question. We often have opinions about people, but we're not usually trying to figure out who they are. The things that Jesus said and did were so striking, however, that it caused people to ask questions about Jesus they wouldn't ask about anybody else. Peter, likely speaking for all of the disciples, declared that Jesus was the Messiah. But it soon became clear that his expectations about the Messiah were not Jesus's expectations. Why did Jesus come to suffer and die when so many thought the Messiah was coming to destroy the unrighteous and smash sinners? Here is one way to put it: Most people expected the Messiah to conquer their enemies. Jesus came to conquer evil.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group)**:**

1. Jesus gave the people around him better than they deserved. This is grace. How have you experienced the grace of God in your life? Can we say that we are experiencing the grace of God even when we're walking through significant suffering or pain? Explain. Do you find yourself feeling entitled to a good life? Explain. Do you give the people around you better than they deserve? Explain.

2. Read 1 Peter 3:8-9. Why, in your experience, do we so often not give people better than they deserve?

3. Read 1 Peter 2:21-25. In what ways did Jesus absorb the cost of our sin? How does this relate to forgiveness? Explain the statement, "In order to forgive other people, we have to absorb the relational cost of their sin and weakness." How do you see this play out in your own life?

4. Read Matthew 12:43-45. When we're addressing something destructive in our lives —a relationship, a habit, negative thoughts—why do we typically need to replace it, not just remove it?

5. Are there any relationships in your life right now that require you to make an intentional effort to bless the other person rather than turn against them? Explain. What's the difference between establishing a healthy boundary and turning against another person?

6. Read 1 Peter 3:13-17. If our personal comfort is not the best way to measure whether we're doing the will of God, what is?

7. Generally speaking, what does it look like for you to live a cross-shaped life in this season?

Pray