



SESSION ONE

Thorns Crown the Winner

Key Verses

They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him.

Mark 15:17–19

LEADER PREPARATION

It is recommended that you read chapter 3, “The Ultimate Been There, Done That,” in *He Chose You* by Max Lucado before you teach so you will be well acquainted with the stories and principles this lesson is based on.

Materials Needed:

- Trailer released November 12, 2016, for the movie [*Beauty and the Beast*](#) (released March 2017) and TV or computer with Internet access
- Thorn, a plant or vine with thorns, or [a crown of thorns](#) (available on Amazon by searching “crown of thorns from the Holy Land”)
- Student Handouts (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)
- Bibles

SESSION ONE OUTLINE

Large Group Lesson: He Chose to Be One of Us

20 minutes

Introduction

Teaching

Pair Up: No Limits

Illustration: Beauty and the Beast

Application

Small Group Discussion

20 minutes

Questions about the Thorns

Questions about the Crown



LARGE GROUP LESSON: He Chose to Be One of Us

Materials Needed:

- Trailer released November 12, 2016, for the movie [*Beauty and the Beast*](#) (released March 2017) and TV or computer with Internet access
- Thorn, a plant or vine with thorns, or [a crown of thorns](#) (available on Amazon by searching “crown of thorns from the Holy Land”)

I. Introduction

- A. This week is the beginning of Lent. *Ask questions to get students to share their knowledge of Lent, how long it lasts, its purpose, and its traditions. Following are some facts about Lent that could be shared.*
- Lent is the season of preparation before Easter.
 - The word Lent comes from an old English term meaning ‘springtime.’
 - Lent lasts 40 days, starting on Ash Wednesday, and ending the Saturday before Easter (which is a span of 46 days, but the 6 Sundays are not counted).
 - The purpose of Lent is to set aside time to reflect on Jesus’ sacrifice by practicing repentance and self-denial.
 - Christians who observe Lent commit to giving up something – a habit, a food, or a pleasure – and to fast from that thing during Lent.
- B. What if we imagined Lent as a season not to *give up* something (like chocolate or Snapchat) but as a season to *receive* gifts from a loving God?
- C. For the next 6 weeks we are going to be preparing ourselves for Easter by looking at several items associated with the death of Jesus on the cross. These items may appear to be rather crude, or even horrifying, yet from another perspective we are going to see how they are symbols of beautiful gifts to us right from God.
- D. The first item we are going to look at is cruel, yet it’s a symbol of a very important gift from God. That item is the *crown of thorns*, and it symbolizes God’s gift of forgiveness.

II. Teaching

- A. When God became one of us in Jesus Christ, he chose to limit himself to our boundaries.
- B. “In the beginning was the Word . . . the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:1, 14).
 - 1. God limited his timelessness—eternity—for living within the boundaries of time, just as we live. When Jesus said things like, “My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4; see 7:6; 12:27; 17:1), he was confining himself to earthly time and having to wait for important events to take place.
 - 2. God limited his “everywhere” presence to a human body. Now, whenever he needed to go somewhere, he had to walk, or get in a boat, or ride on a donkey.
 - 3. God traded sinlessness for the sins and rebellions of the world. He didn’t become sinful, but he took the consequences of our sins on himself.

PAIR UP: No Limits

Think about what it would be like to have to live with limits when you know what “no limits” is like! Think about two of the areas of “no limits” that Jesus gave up, and imagine which one you would enjoy trying. Would you like to have no limits of time, so you could time travel? How about no limits of space, so you could transport yourself to anywhere in the world instantly? Turn to the person next to you and tell them which you would choose and what you would do if you had no limits in that area.

- C. Jesus had all the power of God and had no limits of time or place or had no sin. Yet he gave all that up to come to earth. Perhaps the most difficult thing he gave up was his protection from the pain of our sin. When Jesus wore a crown of thorns, he visually demonstrated that he was taking on the world’s sinfulness.

They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him.

—Mark 15:16–17

To help the students understand the true pain of the crown of thorns, pass around an actual thorn, a plant or vine with thorns, or a [crown of thorns](#) such as this:



1. The thorny crown was not only physically painful, but it represented the pain of paying for our sins.
2. The whole reason we have thorns in the world is because they are one of the consequences of the entrance of sin into the world (see Genesis 3:17–18).
3. The expression “thorn in your side” is used to describe godless people who are allowed to live in Israel (see Numbers 33:55).
4. The crude crown of thorns was God’s beautiful gift to us (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

D. Illustration:

Show the trailer for [Beauty and the Beast](#).

1. In the Disney movie *Beauty and the Beast*, a handsome prince was cursed and became an ugly beast, hairy with large tusks.
2. But a beautiful lady saw him and cared for him. She even kissed him. Then he became his true self—a prince.
3. We are the beast, and God has deeply cared for us in Jesus. The ugly crown of thorns that Jesus wore permits us to be transformed and given a new self, so we can wear a crown of glory forever.

And because of his love, we are transformed and given a new self, blameless before God (see Ephesians 4:22–24).

4. We deserve God’s anger, yet we can become children of God (see Ephesians 2:3; 1:5–8).

III. Application

- A. Why did Jesus go to such lengths to become one of us, only to end up wearing a crown of thorns?
1. The Romans meant for the crown of thorns to be a cruel joke—crowning the “King of the Jews” with a fake crown of torture.
 2. But, the crown of thorns turned out to be a true reflection of what God was doing.
 - a. Crowns were awarded to the victor in a race, so the crown signified that Jesus was victorious.
 - b. Thorns stand for the consequences of sin, so the crown was composed of the very thing Jesus conquered--the problem of sin.
 3. Jesus was the true victor by conquering sin forever.
- B. Do you believe this? Have you received the gift that the crown of thorns represents—the forgiveness of your sins? If not, today in this season of Lent you can receive a wonderful gift from God (see John 3:16).

If appropriate, lead a time of prayer for students to receive Jesus as their Savior.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

At this time, if your group is larger than 10 students, break up into discussion groups of 4 to 6, with an adult facilitator or student leader. Pass out the student handouts, pens, and Bibles.

Materials Needed:

- Student Handouts (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)
- Bibles

Questions about the Thorns:

1. How did you feel when you handled some actual thorns? What insights do you have now about Jesus' suffering?
2. If thorns are a symbol of the consequences of sin, what effect does sin have on you that is similar to what thorns can do to your body?
3. What "thorns" have you experienced in your life? Explain.
4. "Jesus never knew the fruits of sin . . . until he became sin for us. And when he did, all the emotions of sin tumbled in on him like shadows in a forest. He felt anxious, guilty, and alone." (Max Lucado, *He Chose the Nails*, page 26)
How did sin make Jesus feel anxious? Guilty? Alone?
5. Describe some of the "emotions of sin" that you have felt. Why does sin create these painful emotions in us?

Questions about the Crown:

1. Why do you think the thorns placed on Jesus' head were called a crown? Why not a wreath or a circle?
2. Look up the following verses about symbols of honor. In each passage, what is the symbol of honor, and what is being honored?
 - a. Exodus 39:27–31 (*The turban was a symbol of the spiritual authority of the priest*)
 - b. 2 Kings 11:12 (*The crown was a sign of the power of the king*)
 - c. 1 Corinthians 9:24–25 (*The wreath was a symbol of the victory of the athlete*)
3. What did the Roman soldiers want the crown to do to Jesus? (*Torture him, punish him, shame him*) If we look at the crown from God's perspective and see how he transformed it into a gift for us, what does the crown really mean? (*Jesus won the victory over sin; he has the power to be our king and Lord*)
4. God can take whatever gives us pain and shame and transform it into a crown of victory.

- a. What part do we play in that process? *(If we are hurt, we need to give the hurt to God and ask him to heal us; if we have sinned, we need to confess our sin, and turn from it and obey God)*
- b. How then does God actually transform our thorns into a crown? *(Look up Psalm 34:5–7 to see how God transforms shame into joy, and 1 John 1:9 to see how God clears guilt with forgiveness.)*
- c. What might make it difficult to receive this gift of God's victory over our areas of pain or shame? *(We don't think we deserve it; we can't forgive ourselves; we don't want to change)*
- d. What changes would a person have to make if they want to receive the gift of God's victory over something that's giving them pain or shame? *(They have to believe God has the power to change them; they have to give control of that area to God; they need to ask for the power of the Holy Spirit to help them let go of shame or guilt or bad habits)*
- e. Is there anything giving you pain or shame you want God to transform into victory?

Pray Together:

Say something like: We are going to pray for each other now about the specific areas of pain or shame where each person needs God's gift of victory.

Easter/Lent Focus:

A great way to understand and receive God's gifts of Lent is to read an Easter book. We are challenging all our students to join with the rest of the church and read *He Chose You* by Max Lucado in the weeks leading up to Easter. Reading this book will not feel like homework—we promise! It will give us a fresh look at the symbols of the Easter story, and it will help Easter be more meaningful than ever before. This week please read the first 3 chapters in *He Chose You*.