

Lesson 6 • The Cross and the Grain of Wheat

Guiding question: Why must death come before new life?

Central understanding: Jesus describes His approaching death through the grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies. His death and resurrection stand at the center of the gospel. Romans 6 connects believers with that death and resurrection and calls them to walk in newness of life.

Prepare and gather

Prepare worksheet and Scripture-reader copies, pens, and a place to record observations. Read the guide in advance. Invite participation without requiring personal disclosures.

Class readings: John 12:20–33; Romans 6:1–11; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4.

50-minute flow: Welcome and opening prayer, 5 minutes; Scripture and teaching, 25 minutes; discussion, 10 minutes; weekly response, 5 minutes; closing prayer, 5 minutes.

Learning aims

- Read the grain-of-wheat saying in the setting of Jesus' approaching death.
- Explain how Romans 6 joins baptism with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.
- Distinguish the saving work of Christ from the response He calls His followers to make.

Opening conversation

Ask: "What does a seed have to give up for the plant to grow?" A seed is optional; the Scripture does not require an object lesson. Explain that Jesus uses this image while speaking about His own approaching death.

Teach and explore

The grain of wheat and the hour of Jesus

Read: John 12:20–33.

When Greeks seek Jesus, He speaks of the hour in which the Son of man should be glorified. The grain that remains alone is contrasted with the grain that falls into the ground, dies, and bears much fruit.

John later explains that Jesus' words about being lifted up signify the death He will die. The passage first directs us toward His cross. We should hear that setting before applying the image to changes or losses in our own lives.

Ask: What in the passage connects the image of the grain with Jesus' death?

Christ dies for our sins and rises

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:3–4; John 12:20–33.

Paul summarizes the gospel he received: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day. His death answers humanity's need, and His resurrection belongs within the same proclamation.

Christian discipleship begins by receiving this saving work. We are not asked to repeat Christ's atoning death or create salvation through sacrifice of our own. We follow the One who has died and risen.

Ask: Why must we keep Jesus' saving work at the center of this lesson?

Lesson 6 • Teaching and response

Buried with Christ and raised to new life

Read: Romans 6:1–11.

Paul asks whether grace means continuing in sin and answers by describing believers' union with Christ. Baptism into His death is connected with burial and the call to walk in newness of life.

The old man is crucified with Him so that believers will no longer serve sin. Paul directs them to reckon themselves dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ. Baptism's meaning reaches into allegiance, conduct, and the life that follows.

Ask: What new way of living follows the burial and resurrection language?

Following Christ with the life we receive

Read: John 12:24–26; Mark 8:34–35.

Jesus joins the grain saying with the call to follow and serve Him. The life organized around self-preservation at any cost cannot be our final master. Following Christ involves relinquishing sinful control and placing our lives at His service.

The body and the life God gives deserve care. The death language concerns Christ's saving death and our departure from sin's rule; it does not make suffering itself a measure of holiness. The coming lesson will examine that response in daily life.

Ask: What could it mean to follow Jesus in a decision that costs us pride or control?

Discussion guide

1. Whose death is the grain saying first about? — Possible response: Jesus' approaching death; John connects being lifted up with the manner of His death.
2. What belongs at the center of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15? — Possible response: Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection according to the Scriptures.
3. What does Romans 6 say baptism signifies? — Possible response: Participation in Christ's death and burial, with the call to walk in newness of life.
4. What must change when we no longer serve sin? — Possible response: Our allegiance and choices should reflect being alive to God through Christ.

This week's response: Invite a quiet response: "What am I protecting that prevents an honest response to Christ?" Choose one specific practice to leave behind and one action that expresses newness of life, such as telling the truth, making restitution, or serving without seeking recognition. Allow the church's teaching leaders to address questions about baptismal practice while keeping this discussion focused on Paul's language.

Closing prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for giving Yourself for our sins and rising again. Help us receive the life You give and leave behind the rule of sin. Teach us to follow and serve You in the ordinary choices of our days. Amen.

Continue the journey: Lesson Seven considers A Daily Death and the repeated choices involved in living under grace.

Lesson 6 • Scripture reader

King James Version (KJV) • Complete assigned passages

Word help: Reckon means count or regard; henceforth means from this time forward; newness of life means the changed life Paul describes in relation to Christ.

Class readings

John 12:20–33 • KJV

20 And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast:

21 The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.

22 Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.

23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

29 The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.

30 Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.

31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

33 This he said, signifying what death he should die.

Romans 6:1–11 • KJV

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:3–4 • KJV

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

Supporting reading

Mark 8:34–35 • KJV

34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

Before Lesson Seven

Romans 6:12–23 • KJV

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Luke 9:23–25 • KJV

23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?