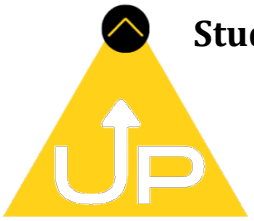
CrossWords Separation (Matthew 27:45-49)

To reconcile us back to God, Jesus suffered separation from Abba Father enduring the mystery of spiritual darkness. This study seeks to unpick what the Bible has to say more fully about the abandonment of Christ on the cross.

Prayer: Lord, you gave up everything for me, including being abandoned by your Father. As I study your word today, by your Spirit, help me see more clearly what your sacrifice means in my life. Amen.

Setting the scene
Describe a time when you've felt abandoned by God. How did you cope? What helped? What didn't?

What bible verses about Christ's sacrifice for you come to mind? *Avoid a concordance.*



Studying the Word

Darkness was one of the plagues God sent on Egypt in a battle between Pharaoh and YHWH over which was the one true God. Later in the Old Testament, darkness describes God's response when his commands aren't kept. In today's study, we're going to survey some passages and see if they can help us build up a better picture of what happens for Christ upon on the cross and why God abandons him. You will hopefully learn more than just what these questions ask.

- Isaiah 59:1-2: What creates a separation between us and God?
- Isaiah 53:6: How does God deal with this problem?
- Romans 3:25-26: What does this tell us about why Jesus died? What is it that creates a separation between anyone and God?
- 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; Colossians 1:20: What was Christ's role upon the cross?
- Romans 6:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:9: Sin is a devastating problem and has tragic consequences but what is God's solution?
- Romans 3:25-26: What do we learn about God and his relationship to sin? How does Jesus' sacrifice address all those who came before his time on earth?
- Hebrews 9:11-14: In similarity to the Law (Lev 16:11-6) what was Christ's role on the cross (v14) and in contrast to the Law what does v12 tell us Jesus achieves?
- Considering all you've read, how do you now understand what is happening for Jesus in this moment of darkness and abandonment in Matthew 27?
- By quoting Psalm 22, Jesus brings the whole of this psalm to mind. How does knowing this offer a different perspective on what Jesus may be saying?

Applying the Word

But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me. (Psalm 22:19)

- What promises can you bring to mind when you feel that God is silent?
- What might God be doing when he seems to be silent in your life?

- What does 2 Corinthians 5:7 mean in light of this study?
- In many areas of life, when things aren't going 'as we expect' we are usually asked about various areas of our lives to check there is nothing we're doing to unwittingly cause the problem. In his book, *God on mute,* Pete Grieg challenges the reader to do the same. Here are a few: when you're feeling like God has abandoned you, are you still:
    - Praying and worshipping God?
    - Studying his word?
    - Making space to listen to God?
    - Meeting with other in fellowship to be encouraged?
    - Considered any unrepented sin in your life?
    - Is this something that many people experience and may be isn't actually God being silent but a difficulty we all face?

  Regarding your prayers:

    - Are your motives correct?
    - Are they inline with God's character and will?
    - Do they make sense or disregard someone's free will or ignore wider issues knock-on effects of justice?
    - Is there spiritual opposition? This should not immediately be assumed but perseverance, courage, faith and use of God's Word are all weapons in this battle (see Ephesians 6:10-18)
    - How long and persistently have you prayed? (Whilst remembering prayer is not a magic spell) Is he growing your trust and reliance on him?

- How can this study influence how you live for Christ on your frontline?
- What would be a good witness when facing what our friends/colleagues may consider 'significant problems'?
- Have a think about your everyday language. Does this reflect your belief that there is more to life than, for instance, mother nature at work or coincidence? How might you make minor changes to reflect your differing beliefs from a secular world?
- How can we support one another as community when God seems to be silent? If we aren't willing to share about this, why is this when Jesus cries out from the cross for all to hear?

Finish your time by thanking Jesus for his promise in Matthew 28—and surely I am with you always—and God's promise recorded in Hebrews 13—never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.

"Try to exclude the possibility of suffering
which the order of nature and existence of free will involves,
and you will find that you have excluded life itself."

C. S. Lewis