

VIDA NUEVA INTERNATIONAL
LAZARUS/CRUCIFIXION SERVICE

Service #1

Leaders Director and Spiritual Director(s)

Length 60 Minutes

Introduction

This service should be shared by the Director and Spiritual Directors. The service is connected to the New Life/Reconciliation talk and the Spiritual Director who gave that talk should reference some material from the talk in the beginning remarks.

I. The service

- A. Effects of Sin (sickness - death)
- B. Freedom through forgiveness (God and Community)
- C. Self Examination (mirror with support of prayer)
- D. Declaration (marking pelon strip)
- E. Reality (tying strips and seeing Lazarus)
- F. Forgiveness
 - 1. Verbal "Lord Jesus Forgive Me."
 - 2. Physical (untying)
 - 3. Support (ask for our friends forgiveness)
 - 4. Destruction (burning)
- G. New life (As fire goes out - Grace abounds.)
- H. Joy (Song)

II. Materials List

- A. The following materials will be needed for the service to be effective:
 - 1. One hand mirror for each table or group
 - 2. One strip of pelon cloth for each person
 - 3. Pencil, felt tip writer for each person
 - 4. A metal bucket to burn pelon strips in
 - 5. A bell
 - 6. A person to play Lazarus who is familiar with role

III. Instructions

- A. The following instructions should be followed:
 - 1. Before the service begins, have the materials distributed, have the room darkened, and try to have the same number of people in each group.
 - 2. Be sure to have all music selected and available before the service.

IV. Beginning

Jesus tells us in the gospel of John 8:31-36; "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

V. The Effects of Sin

"Sin is any lack of conformity, active or passive to the moral law of God. This may be an act, a thought, or inner disposition or a state."- Berkhoff

A. Sin is a principle of evil

1. Universal - There is no suggestion in the OT or NT that any part of the human race is exempt from its affects. After the fall, no original righteousness exists.
2. Sin is Internal - Although much of Jesus' teaching is centered on external acts, the root cause was seen to be much deeper since the "principle of sin" is internalized.

B. Sin is an act - Man has the full potential within him to commit acts of evil, and his self-determined violation of the law renders him guilty before God.

1. Sin alienates us from God.
2. Sin creates a debt we cannot pay.
3. Sin enslaves us and becomes our task-master.
4. Sin brings condemnation/judgment.

C. Sin is an inner spiritual infection - Sin creates within us a sickness that weakens us and holds us captive.

1. Jesus notes that we become a slave to our sickness. A sickness, that unless treated, may result in spiritual death.
2. This infection is progressive - Paul reminds his readers in Romans 6:19 that there is "ever-increasing wickedness" which leads to greater and greater iniquity.
3. The ultimate result is death - The final result of sin is Spiritual and physical death. (Jn 3:16; I Jn 2:25; Jn 5:24; I Jn 3:14).

D. Sin is isolation

1. Sin also isolates us from those who can best help us.
2. Our shame and guilt transform us in a way that makes it difficult for us to seek the forgiveness that Jesus longs to provide for us.

E. To help find the way toward forgiveness the apostle Paul told the Galatians:

1. "My brothers, if someone is detected in sin, you who live by the Spirit should gently set him right, each of you trying to avoid falling into temptation himself. Help carry one another burdens, in that way you will fulfill the law of Christ".

VI. Self Examination

To overcome sin, like a doctor, we need to examine our inner self to diagnose the infection. It is important that we try our very best to examine our inner self, to search out the attitude that is causing our sinfulness.

A. It may be...

1. pride - our obsession with our ego
2. envy - our desire for another's advantage
3. greed - our obsession for wealth
4. anger - our outrage from an injury to our ego

5. sloth - our laziness toward action
 6. gluttony - our unsatisfied appetite
 7. lust - our obsession for pleasure
- B. If we are to be set free from the sickness of our inner sin we need to tell Jesus of our attitudes.
1. James tells us: "The prayer uttered in faith will reclaim the one who is ill, and the Lord will restore him to health. If he has committed any sins, forgiveness will be his. Hence, declare your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may find healing."
- C. At this time, we are going to examine ourselves for the things that we would most like Jesus to set us free from. Something that we know would make us a better person if we could change it.
1. There is one mirror on each table. Would someone pick it up (lights should be dimmed at this point). All other people at the table are to keep their eyes closed. Only the person with the mirror is to have their eyes opened at any time.
 2. To begin, the person with the mirror will state his/her name. Everyone else in the group at each table will pray for that person.
 3. The person with the mirror will look into the mirror and silently conduct their self-examination.
 4. When the bell is rung the person with the mirror will pass it to the person on the right and close their eyes. The person with the mirror will then open their eyes, state their name to the group, look into the mirror and begin their self-examination while the group now prays for that person.
 5. What is it that I most want Jesus to help me eliminate in my life that would make me a better person?
 - a) What would set me free from my shame and guilt?
 - b) Am I afraid?
 - c) What am I so angry about? Why do I feel guilty?
 - d) Why do I hate? What causes my annoying habits?
 - e) What am I unsure of?
 - f) Why do I dislike someone?
 - g) What is there that I don't like about me?
 6. Let's begin now. Everyone close their eyes except the person with the mirror. Let the person with the mirror announce their name.

VII. Marking Strips

At this time, would everyone at each table take one of the cloth strips and something to write with.

- A. In private, would each person write in the center of the cloth strip those things that they discovered during their examination that they would like to be free of.
- B. When you have finished tie a knot in the center of the cloth strip so that what you have written cannot be seen. What is there is between you and God.
- C. Now we will go to the dining room continue.

VIII. Tying Strips on Lazarus

When the Jews buried their dead, they anointed the body with oils and spices and then the

body was bound.

- A. To see what a person would look like that was bound in sin, let us all take our cloth strips and tie them onto a person we will call Lazarus.
- B. Tie them on different places of Lazarus body. Sin binds our bodies. We cover ourselves to hide our shame and our guilt. We don't want anyone to see what's inside of us.
- C. The person who persists in sin will eventually get themselves completely bound until they look like a corpse. They have no love inside them and although they are alive, if you were able to see inside them it would be dark, no love, no light of Christ. It's frightening!!

IX. Lazarus Story

In the gospel of John, we hear the story of Lazarus. He was a very good friend of Jesus as was Lazarus two sisters, Martha and Mary. Jesus loved them all.

- A. Martha and Mary had sent word to Jesus that he was critically ill. We begin the story as Jesus has come to the outskirts of the village of Bethany. Jesus has talked with Martha and has asked her to send her sister Mary to see Him. (John 11:32-44)
- B. Jesus called His friend Lazarus, whom He loved back to life from the dead. Lazarus was alive when he came out of the tomb but he was still bound. Through our acceptance of Jesus, we have the new life of Christ in us.
- C. We know that as Jesus loved and cared for His friend, Lazarus, that Jesus also loves and cares for us. Sometimes it is difficult for people to see the life of Christ in us because we are bound up, like Lazarus, by the things that we wrote on our cloth strips. It is Jesus who can restore that new life within us. All we need do is ask.
- D. Remember Judas, the disciple that betrayed Jesus. He betrayed Jesus by identifying him to the Roman soldiers in the garden of Gethsemane. Judas walked up to the Lord and kissed Him.
- E. This was a sign to the soldiers that this was Jesus. Judas has been condemned by generations for this act. But, Judas' biggest fault is not his betrayal. Oh, No! Judas' fault was that he didn't believe that Jesus would forgive him. And Jesus would have forgiven him if he had only asked. But he didn't and so to end his agony and torment he hung himself. Judas was sorry for his act. But he did not believe in Jesus for forgiveness.
- F. God, through Jesus, provides us with the access to the miracle of new life this very moment. We can ask for this new life by taking a moment to say with our hearts, in faith "Lord Jesus, Forgive me!"
- G. In the story of Lazarus, we see that Jesus gave the responsibility of putting that new life to work in Lazarus to his family and friends. When Lazarus comes out of the tomb with new life in him, Jesus instructs them to "untie him, and let him go free"...

X. Untying Lazarus

St Paul reminds us of our responsibility in this matter in the words he speaks to the Galatians: "My brothers, if someone is detected in sin, you who live by the Spirit should gently set him right, each of you trying to avoid falling into temptation himself." Help carry one another's burdens, in that way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

- A. At this time, let us untie Lazarus. Let everyone come and untie a cloth strip from

- Lazarus. Not your own but someone else's. Do not untie the center knot in the strip but roll it up and clench it in your fist.
- B. We truly carry one another's burdens in our hands at this time. Jesus has brought us to new life by our seeking forgiveness and now we are going to set each other free from our bondage.
 - C. We are going to go outside and throw these strips into a fire. As we do so, also remember the words in the Lord's prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Let us ask for our friends forgiveness and our own.
 - D. In the words of the apostle Paul to the Romans: "There is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ Jesus. The law of the Spirit, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has freed you from the law of sin and death."
 - E. Fire is the symbol for purifying. The words on these cloths will be destroyed by God's fire. As the light of the fire of sin grows dim, there is a new light of grace growing brighter in each of us.
 - F. This, my brothers, is a time for rejoicing. We are free!! Let us rejoice in song...

Lazarus Service
7/30/2001
Vida Nueva International