



**FAMOUS LAST WORDS**  
**The Sayings of Jesus from the Cross**

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It's that time again – time to get ready and prepared for a week at Opportunity Camp. Let me thank you for your decision to make yourself available to God to serve in this way. God uses our availability much more than our ability.

Opportunity Camp has been a special place for over forty years because of people like you. What you do between now and the week of camp is very important. I hope you will join me in praying for our fellow staff members, volunteers who will come to Opportunity Camp from across the country. Most of all, I hope you will begin praying for our campers. For one week, God will entrust them to each of us. What a great privilege!

Enclosed is a copy of this year's teaching material. It is designed to give you an overview of each day's theme, along with questions you can use on your Forest Walk. The more familiar you become with the themes and passages, the better equipped you will be.

Once again, thank you for serving God by serving his children.

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# Famous Last Words

## The Sayings of Jesus from the Cross

### Introduction

We can learn much about a person by listening to their last words. This year at Opportunity Camp we will be exploring the last words of Jesus – spoken as he hung on the cross. Altogether, there are seven sayings; we will look at four of them. I would encourage you to become familiar with all seven. These seven sayings could also be used for evening devotionals.

Here are the final words of Jesus:

1. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).
2. “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).
3. “Dear woman, here is your son” and “Here is your mother” (John 19:26-27).
4. “I am thirsty” (John 19:28).
5. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34; Matthew 27:46).
6. “It is finished” (John 19:30).
7. “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

Historically, these seven sayings are called words of:

1. Forgiveness
2. Salvation
3. Relationship
4. Abandonment
5. Distress
6. Triumph
7. Reunion/Trust

Our goal throughout the week will be to acquaint our campers not just with these phrases but also the power of the cross. Here are the chapters within the Gospels that tell of the crucifixion:

- Matthew 26-27
- Mark 14-15
- Luke 22-23
- John 18-19

# Monday: Forgiveness

*“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” - Luke 23:34*

## **Main Thought**

While enduring extreme suffering, Jesus was focused on the needs of others rather than himself. In this saying we learn that his love is truly unconditional.

## **Background and Explanation**

The question is often asked, “Who is Jesus referring to?” There are at least two possible answers. He could be referring to the Roman soldiers who have conducted his execution. They are simply obeying orders and may not be aware of the significance of what they are doing. Jesus could also be referring to the Jews who clamored for his death, shouting “crucify him” to Pilate. They didn’t understand what they were doing either – crucifying the Messiah they had been waiting for.

In a larger context, his words reach even to us. Thankfully, God’s forgiveness extends to us today because there are many times we don’t know what we’re doing either!

*This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another – 1 John 4:9-11*

Jesus died on the cross so that we might be forgiven. As those who have been forgiven, our challenge is to extend forgiveness to others – even when they do not know what they are doing.

## **Forest Walk – Conversation Starters**

The goal on Monday is to establish a relationship with your camper. Therefore, it would be good to spend a few minutes getting to know one another before jumping into the questions.

1. What do you know about Jesus?
2. What kind of person do you think Jesus was? Why would someone want to crucify him?
3. How hard do you think it was for Jesus to forgive those who had put him on the cross?
4. Do you find it hard to forgive at times? Why?
5. How does it feel to be forgiven?

## Tuesday: Relationship

*“Dear woman, here is your son” and “Here is your mother” - John 19:26-27*

### **Main Thought**

Although he was dying, Jesus remained concerned for the wellbeing of his mother. In these words we see the human side of Jesus.

### **Background and Explanation**

*After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him. But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." For even his own brothers did not believe in him – John 7:1-5*

We know from this story in John 7 that Jesus' own brothers did not believe in him. Apparently, this hasn't changed by the time of the crucifixion and none of Jesus' brothers were present at the cross. Also absent – or at least not mentioned – is Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus. These seem to indicate that perhaps he had already died.

So, Jesus gives the care of his mother to the apostle John. John is often referred to as the disciple “whom Jesus loved.” This does not mean Jesus didn't love his other disciples; it simply indicates the special relationship these two shared. Therefore, it is not surprising that Jesus would entrust his mother to John.

This passage shows that Jesus wasn't only concerned with our spiritual welfare but also our physical needs as well.

### **Forest Walk – Conversation Starters**

1. Tell me a little bit about your family. Do you have any brothers or sisters?
2. What do you think Mary was feeling as she watched her son on the cross?
3. Why weren't Jesus' brothers at the cross?
4. Why was John there?
5. What was Jesus asking John to do?

# Wednesday: Thirsty

*"I am thirsty" - John 19:28*

## **Main Thought**

There are two important theological words that Christmas introduces us to: Emmanuel = God with us. Incarnation = God in flesh. In this saying from the cross, we see the reality of the incarnation: Jesus was thirsty.

## **Background and Explanation**

Jesus refused the initial drink of vinegar, gall and myrrh (Matthew 27:34 and Mark 15:23) offered to alleviate his thirst. One of the messianic prophecies about Jesus was that he would be given vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:21).

Throughout church history there have been a minority of people who have denied the humanity of Jesus. This passage clearly shows that Jesus was not a ghost or apparition; he was fully human. The apostle John introduces us to Jesus in this manner:

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. - John 1:14*

Jesus became human and he dwelled among us. The word "dwelling" comes from the Hebrew word "*shekinah*" which is best interpreted as "God's presence with them." John is telling his readers that when Jesus came he and the others had seen the "manifestation of God's presence and power."

The humanity of Jesus is theologically important. The book of Hebrews reminds us, "*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need*" (Hebrews 15-16).

## **Forest Walk – Conversation Starters**

1. When was the last time you were really thirsty? Why?
2. Have you ever tasted vinegar? Do you think it would be nice drink?
3. There are two titles used for Jesus in the New Testament: Son of God and Son of Man. What do you think they mean?
4. Why is important to remember that Jesus was human?

# Thursday: Victory

*"It is finished" - John 19:30*

## **Main Thought**

Jesus knew he was dying for a reason: *"No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father" - John 10:18.*

What was finished was not only his physical life, but the very reason why he came to earth to begin with: to help people find their way back to God. In this way, the Scriptures had been fulfilled.

## **Background and Explanation**

This statement from the cross is Jesus' recognition that his suffering is over and his task is completed. Jesus had been obedient to the Father and showed his love for us by redeeming us with his death on the cross.

The following passages show that Jesus knew his purpose:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. – John 3:16-17*

*... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many – Matthew 20:28*

*Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." – Luke 5:31-32*

*It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. – John 13:1*

## **Forest Walk – Conversation Starters**

1. What is something that you finished recently?
2. What does it feel like to finish something?
3. Why did Jesus come to earth in the first place?
4. Why did Jesus have to die?
5. What did Jesus do for you?

## Friday: Trust

*"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" - Luke 23:46*

### **Main Thought**

We see that Jesus has complete trust in the Father. He entered death in the same way he lived each day of his life – offering his life as the perfect sacrifice and placing himself in God's hands.

### **Background and Explanation**

This last statement from the cross is a quotation from Psalm 31:5 ... *"Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God."*

Although he had earlier felt separated from God (*"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" - Mark 15:34*), he still retains his trust and faith in God. This has been a consistent theme of Jesus' life, from the time he was tempted by Satan to when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

*"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." - Mark 14:36*

*When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. - 1 Peter 2:23*

Jesus' ability to trust God even in the midst of the most dire circumstances stands as an encouragement for us to do the same. He does not blame God for his situation. Instead, he trusts God's judgment about what is happening and why.

### **Forest Walk – Conversation Starters**

1. What have you enjoyed the most about camp?
2. Who in your life do you trust?
3. Why do you think Jesus trusted God?
4. Do you think it was hard for Jesus to trust God while he was on the cross?
5. Do you think we can trust God, too?