

The Whip, the Hammer and the Cross

Subject: Jesus' crucifixion

Big Idea: "Jesus died on the cross for us."

Preparation:

This week will take some extra preparation. This message, which is acted out the as story is told, has been performed thousands of times and only needs a little extra work to make it work. The idea is that the narrator acts out the message in the front as the actors act it out behind him. For instance, he hits the whip on the ground, while the guards whip Jesus behind him. It must be done very dramatically by both the narrator and the actors, preferably in sync.

Consider making this an outreach. See if you can get the theater or some special venue that may be more suitable. Do special promotion to get people to this one. You could perhaps raise money to buy pizza or some other kind of special promotion. This message, done well, will have a real impact. Remember, the story of Christ is of incredible historical significance and is a very gripping story to Christians and non-Christians alike.

- **Props:** Some very simple props are needed.
 1. **2 "cat o' nine tails."** This is the kind of whip that they scourged Jesus with. It is made by taking nine strips of brown vinyl (available at your local fabric store, you will need only 1/2 yds.) 1/2 inch wide by 3 feet long and attaching them to a 6 inch dowel (or stick) and then wrapping one piece of vinyl around the stick to hold the other strips on the stick (see illustration).
 2. **4 Large Nails.** These can be purchased at any hardware store. Get the largest nails available. They will be about 12" long and cost about \$1 each.
 3. **2 Hammers.** It is best to borrow these, because hammers are expensive, but anyone can loan you one. The best kind to use is a short sledge hammer (about 3-4 lbs. with a 10" handle).
 4. **A crown of thorns.** A small wreath from a craft store will do the trick and is very inexpensive. You'll need a rock to pound in the thorns.
 5. **A Cross (Optional).** You don't have to have a cross for this drama, and some cases it won't work because of space, but if you are doing the drama someplace large, it adds to the dramatic element. It can be made in a couple of minutes for under \$5. Purchase two 8' 2x4's. Cut one to about 6'. Cut your remaining 2' piece to three 8" pieces. The six-foot piece becomes the crossbeam, using 3" screws or nails, attach it to the upright at about 5¹/₂ feet (this may vary depending on the person you use). Use the three 8" pieces as a foot hold. Attach

one to the bottom of the cross, then the next to the first, then the second to the third (**see illustration**). Make sure you put the nail holes into the cross first so they only need to be tapped in during the drama. The actor who portrays Jesus will hold on to the hand nails and the foot nail will go between his feet.

6. A robe (optional). Any white robe will do or you can make a wrap out of any material you want.

- **Chose the actors.** You will need two or three guards and Jesus. They will have no lines (you may opt for Jesus saying a couple of lines on the cross). Have them work through the script with the narrator at least twice. They must be able to lift Jesus with or without the cross.
- **Assign someone to deliver the main message.** It should be read. Add and subtract as necessary to make the story work with your group, in it's unedited form it is about 25 minutes long, so don't waste time. This is a very gripping story that must be delivered with great emotion for it to work. Practice several times a head of time, at least twice with the actors.
- **Decide how the meeting will be concluded.** You may wish to offer to pray with those that would like to make a commitment to the Lord. You might want to lead in a group "sinners prayer" You may make some leaders available for special prayer needs.

<p><u>Always promote next week.</u> Next week's meeting will be: "Who Knew?" Everyone dies, but Jesus is the only person who came back to life after three days. This is what makes Christianity different from every other religion.</p>

The Whip, the Hammer and the Cross (actors script)

The actors begin to lead Jesus out into the scene

I don't think we realize the pain of a scourging. Some of the worst torture that could ever be endured was inflicted by those who would scourge. Nails would later be used. A hammer would later be used to drive the nails in His hands. But some say the scourging was the most painful of them all. You see, the cat-o'-nine-tails was what they used to use. A cat-o'-nine-tails was nine strips leather, like you see here. *(Displaying the cat o' nine tails)* On the ends would be small nails. Other times there would be a thorn. Other times there would be a rock or glass, something that would tear the hide. They would soak this in troughs of water to get the skin off, and also to make it heavier so that it would rip and tear.

The guards strip Jesus

Some people think that Pilate never expected to see Jesus after he turned Him over to the scourgers. These men were sadistic men. They were hired because they got a certain sensual satisfaction out of making men cry for mercy. Pilate knew that Jesus was a real man. Pilate knew that Jesus wouldn't beg for mercy, and it would incite these men to beat Him harder. That's why later when Jesus was brought back to Pilate, Pilate said, "Look here's the **man**." What Pilate was saying was, "Here is a real man."

Guard with whip rolls up sleeve and mimics dialog

Jesus was a man. Jesus was a man's man. You can almost picture one old guard as he says, "Strip the body of Jesus." A big old burly guard as he rolls up his sleeves and says, "I'll make Him beg for mercy this time." History says they stripped Him completely naked.

Whips Jesus in sync with narrator several times then continues whipping after the narrator stops, Jesus is in incredible pain.

This big old guard took that heavy whip, he reached down as far as he could, with all the strength he had, and he came down on the back of Jesus. Another old guard cried, "HIT HIM AGAIN!" Again the whip came down on the back of Jesus. Over and over and over again. 39 times as he screamed in agony. They called this kind of beating "forty-minus-one" because they believed no man could live through 40 lashes. They would literally beat you within an inch of your life.

When they finished beating Jesus, Josephus the historian said you could see His ribs. But Jesus was a

One guard place the thorns on Jesus' head as he winces a little in pain

The other guard now pound the thorns in with a rock as Jesus shows incredible agony
They strike and mock him

(The guards finish beating Jesus and lead him out)

Man. You imagine as one old guard says, "He's a King, why doesn't He have a Crown?" The other says, "We'll make Him a crown." They make a crown out of huge thorns. One guard puts it on the head of Jesus who is really the King of kings. He places it lightly on His Head and steps back and said, "Now the King has a crown." He steps up and crams it down on His brow causing His eyes to bug forward. They fall down in mock worship. "The King of the Jews. Ha-ha." One big guard takes a rock and hits Him on the head and causes the thorns to go deep into His brow. They began to punch him and they scream, "You're the prophet, who hit you?"

They spit on him; they watched him as he bled. Laughing. We could never portray the violence done to Jesus here. It wouldn't be suitable for viewing. If it were viewed as a movie, what he really went through, no one under 17 would be admitted without an adult. It would receive a restricted rating.

They lead Jesus back to Pilate. Pilate was not a man of conviction. He was a politician. He had just had an innocent man beaten almost to death, because of the crowd's wishes. It wasn't that he was so evil, he just didn't care that much. But with Jesus beaten, the problem was solved, he wouldn't have to kill this man, he didn't want to anyway.

The Bible says that Pilate led Jesus out for the crowd to view Him. Surely they would feel remorse for what they had done to this man. To look at him was difficult. In a morbid attempt at humor, some of the guards had added to Jesus' costume of the crown of thorns, a royal robe. What a sorrowful sight Jesus must have been, how terrible the crowd must have felt. But they wouldn't be pacified by a little blood sport. They wanted him dead.

The Bible tells us the crowd cried out, "Crucify, crucify!" But Pilate said, "I have no basis for what we've already done to this man." But on the edge of rioting, the crowd drowned him out. "CRUCIFY, CRUCIFY." Pilate said "I don't want this innocent man's Blood on my hands." But the crowd cried. "Let his blood be on us and our children. It's our responsibility, don't concern yourself." They led him away to jail.

Jesus carrying the cross and guards yelling at him enter the room-- Jesus is weak and falls

Jesus stands looking over the crowd thoughtfully

Guards grab him and drag him to the ground. Guard grabs his hand

Pounding nails with the hammer loud enough for

As he lay on that cold jail cell floor, we can wonder what he might have been thinking . . .

Did he pray all night?

Did he weep because his friends all turned their backs on him?

All too soon, he was disturbed by the sound of the cell door slamming open. They dragged him into the courtyard. They give Him a big heavy cross. Historians say that the greatest wounds that Jesus carried to the cross, the most painful, may not have been from the nails, or the spear, or even from the whip, but from that old cross that tore into His tender shoulder blades. You talk about lonely. Where are the thousands that used to follow Him? There are only a few that love Him. Where are the crippled people that He healed and they walked again? Where are the people with terminal diseases that didn't die because He healed them? Where are those that said they would die for Him? They were all gone.

Jesus kept pushing his cross. Soon He could go no further. He staggered and He fell beneath the load. The scene was so gruesome that they named the path that Jesus took the Via Delarosa--"the way of suffering"

If you go to Jerusalem today, you can still see the hill called "The Skull." You see, they had chosen it for the place of death because looking at it, it looks like a skull.

As Jesus got to the top of that hill, he must have stood, looking over the city that He had come to save. They were going to nail Him to a cross. What must have been going through his mind? Did he think about the heaven he left to come to this earth to be tortured to death? He had angels worship him day and night in heaven, but now he is here alone.

Suddenly, a big old guard interrupts His thoughts, throwing Him to the ground. He grabs His arm to twist it, expecting a fight from Jesus. But not so. Jesus places his own hand on the cross. That hand that touched people and they were healed, the hand that touched the blind and they could see, the hand that did only good, those men took that hand and put it upon the cross. And they drove nails into that hand.

the crowd to hear and Jesus screams in agony, three hits for each nail, with a pause in between

They raise Jesus on the cross as he is in unbelievable pain. (If there is no cross, Jesus simply makes the form of a cross, leave the nails on the floor)

Guards mimic giving Jesus a drink, but he won't drink

(Optional) Jesus says the line in a loud painful voice

(Optional) Jesus says the line in a loud painful voice - Jesus dies with one last breath

Jesus stays in his position for the rest of the meeting (If this isn't possible have the guards take him down as soon as he is dead)

They pounded the nails as Jesus screamed in agony and blood splattered. The first hand (hit, hit, hit), then the other (hit, hit, hit). Then they went to his feet (hit, hit, hit).

Then those old guards took that cross, they raised it as high as they could and they dropped the cross. It tore His hands and feet. There He is, the Son of God, God's **only** son, the Son who came and did nothing but good. But now, he is nailed to a cross. And suddenly, Jesus feels alone. His disciples have denied Him; they have betrayed Him. His followers are now hiding in caves for fear of their lives. Jesus is alone.

"Water," He says. "Give Me water." They place vinegar and gall, a painkiller, to His mouth. But Jesus will not drug himself as he pays for the sins of the world; he must do this once and for all.

Alone. Jesus feels that everyone has forsaken Him. Again, where are the crowds? Where are the thousands that sang songs about him four days earlier? Jesus at last feels that he has been left to die even by His Father. Jesus cries out, "Oh God, why have you turned your back on me?"

God could have sent an angel. God could have sent an army of angels. Jesus himself could have called for ten thousand angels, but death begins to set in.

Jesus' body begins to sag with fatigue. There is no one to love him now. They only spit the spit of hate upon His face. There was no hand to shoo away the flies landing on the dried blood all over his body. Jesus, more lonely than any man could feel, looks up to the sky and says, "It is finished." Jesus hangs his head and dies."

(pause for a few seconds)

There was darkness over the land. The dead came out of their graves. There was a great earthquake.

Think about the people there and what they must have thought. People scattered in fear. They knew

<p>Guard mimics the line silently</p>	<p>this was a mistake. Even one of the guards said, "He really was God." What if you had been there? . . .</p>
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The Whip, the Hammer and the Cross

Every year around this time, Christians all over the world gather to trace the footsteps of Jesus. The road that Jesus is believed to have walked down is known as the "Via Delarosa," Latin for "the way of suffering." Many Christians have made the trip to those places. We want to take you there today and revisit the last hours of Jesus' life.

The story really begins in a garden overlooking the city of Jerusalem. It was called "Gethsemane."

If you go to the spot from which Jesus prayed, they say there are still olive trees that were there in Jesus' time. You can see things from Jesus' perspective. As Jesus prayed from that spot, He could see the entire city of Jerusalem that He loved so much. Jesus could have seen the guards as they were coming to take Him. He would have seen the torches over the hill and knew that they were coming right towards Him. They would soon come and take Him away to torture Him. Jesus could have escaped in the night. But the Bible says that Jesus came for one reason; that was to die that He might be the Savior for the lost. It has dawned on me that this was part of the suffering for Jesus who often stood and overlooked Jerusalem and wept. The city that he had come to save was going to crucify Him.

The Bible says that Jesus was in such agony, that capillaries broke in his forehead and he sweated blood.

He didn't want to die. You know, Jesus was just like you and me. When He cut his finger, He bled. When He was tired, He needed sleep. Jesus knew what a crucifixion was like. He had seen many men crucified along the roadside. Jesus, knowing what it was like, looked up to heaven and said, "Oh God, if it's possible, let's not do this, but I don't want to do things my way, Lord, we'll do it your way."

Suddenly, from the shadows, Judas came and kissed Jesus on the side of the cheek. It was the kiss of betrayal. It was the kiss of death. It was also the kiss that was to signal the guards to come in and take Jesus. They turned Him to a guard who carried Him away to the governor's judgment hall.

Now, I don't think many of us realize what went on in that judgment hall. You see, the governor, Pilate, didn't really want to put Jesus to death. Pilate was a politician; the crowd swayed him. Pilate didn't want to go through with it, but he didn't have much choice. He questioned Jesus, looking for a reason to release him, but wouldn't say anything to defend himself, not matter what he was accused of.

You might ask, "Why didn't Jesus speak up in defense of Himself?" The reason is simple: if Jesus had spoken one word, Pilate would have had to release Him. But Jesus didn't come to defend Himself. Jesus came to give Himself.

Finally, with nowhere else to turn, Pilate took Jesus before the crowd of people outside the palace. He said, "I find no fault in Him. But what shall I do to this one who is called the Son of God." And suddenly, one cried out, "CRUCIFY HIM!" And that crucifixion cry became a trio, "CRUCIFY HIM!" Then a quartet, "CRUCIFY HIM!" Soon, the whole crowd screamed and the top of their lungs, "CRUCIFY, CRUCIFY, CRUCIFY . . ."

Pilate said, "But I find no fault in this man." Then he thought, "I will trick them." He said to them, "At this time of year, I have the power to release to you one man. I am going to give you a choice. Either you can take Barabbas or Jesus."

Barabbas was a murderer and a thief. Historians say that Pilate chose him because he was known for murder and violence and rape. Daughters were not safe. Pilate knew they would not choose Barabbas. He was the Charles Manson of his day, the Jeffrey Dalmer of his day, the most notorious criminal. Pilate thought, "Surely they will choose Jesus, not Barabbas."

So he said, "I will give to you one of two men; either Barabbas or Jesus."

The people that had laid down their coats so that his donkey wouldn't even have to walk on the ground 4 days earlier cried out, "We want Barabbas!"

Pilate couldn't believe it. He said, "But Jesus has done nothing wrong"

Suddenly the words of Barabbas began to ring across the city. You would have thought that Barabbas was a conquering king or a hero, while Jesus, the Son of God who only did good, stood hated by all.

Pilate just couldn't bring himself to do it. He thought, "I'll have him whipped within an inch of his life. That will satisfy the bloodthirsty mob."

They took the Son of God. Pilate turned Him over to the scourging hall. They led Him away to be beaten.

"You brought this man to me as someone who was inciting the people to riot. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. I'll have him flogged and then he's free to go."

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Did he pray all night?

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All too soon, he was disturbed by the sound of the cell door slamming open. They dragged him into the courtyard. They give Him a big heavy cross. Historians say that the greatest wounds that Jesus carried to the cross, the most painful, may not have been from the nails, or the spear, or even from the whip, but from that old cross that tore into His tender shoulder blades. You talk about lonely. Where are the thousands that used to follow Him? There are only a few that love Him. Where are the crippled people that He healed and they walked again? Where are the people with terminal diseases that didn't die because he healed them? Where are those that said they would die for Him? They were all gone.

(Jesus carrying the cross and guards yelling at him enter the room)

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did only good, those men took that hand and put it upon the cross. And they drove nails into that hand.

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"Water," He says. "Give Me water." They place vinegar and gall, a painkiller, to His mouth. But Jesus will not drug himself as he pays for the sins of the world; he must do this once and for all.

Alone. Jesus feels that everyone has forsaken Him. Again, where are the crowds? Where are the thousands that sang songs about him four days earlier? Jesus at last feels that he has been left to die even by His Father. Jesus cries out, "Oh God, why have you turned your back on me?"

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(Pause for a few seconds)

There was darkness over the land. The dead came out of their graves. There was a great earthquake.

Think about the people there and what they must have thought. People scattered in fear. They knew this was a mistake. Even one of the guards said, "He really was God."

What if you had been there? It's easy to think, "I wouldn't have pounded the nails in His hand. I wouldn't have been part of the crowd that shouted for him to be crucified. I wouldn't have let this innocent man be tortured to death."

But the bible tells us that we are responsible for his death. It is because of the wrong we have done that Jesus died. He chose to do it, but it was because of us. He paid for the wrong we have done, from the worst abuse, to the smallest lie. The sentence for every wrong act is eternal punishment, which was the law that God set up with humans. But he loved us so much, he didn't want to punish us. But how could God be considered good if he didn't care about evil? He solved the problem by sending his son to be the only person in history that didn't break Gods law and deserve punishment.

But it doesn't end there. The bible tells us that when we ignore all that Jesus did for us, we insult him like the guards that mocked him that day. When we reject him and his teaching, we are like the crowd who chooses evil over good. When we just don't care, we are like Pilate, who killed Jesus by his indifference. When we just keep doing what we think we should, we are like the guards who murdered an innocent man, just doing their jobs.

Jesus is on trial right now. As much as He was on trial before Pilate, He stands here today. I stand before you as Pilate. You become the jury in this audience.

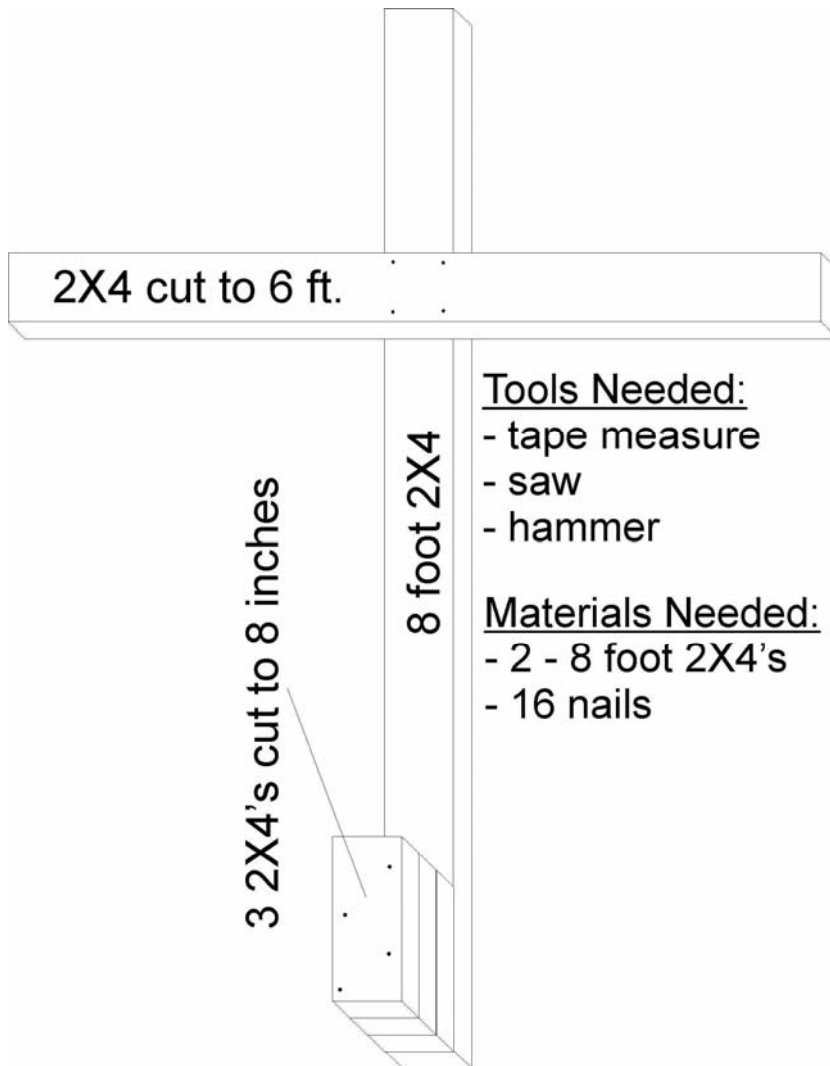
If we reject Him, you are putting the nails in His hands. If we walk out of here and pretend this is just a good story, we are walking over the beaten, bloody body of Jesus. The bible says we walk on his blood like its nothing. So here it is; Jesus is here. You are the jury. What are you going to do with Jesus?

I want to give you the opportunity to accept Jesus as your savior and begin living like what he did matters.

Next week's meeting will be: "Who Knew?" Everyone dies, but Jesus is the only person who came back to life after three days. This is what makes Christianity different from every other religion.
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Props Needed

Cross

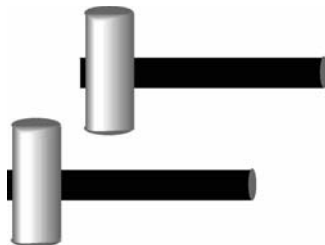
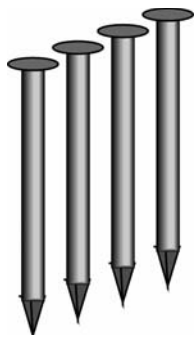


Tools Needed:

- tape measure
- saw
- hammer

Materials Needed:

- 2 - 8 foot 2X4's
- 16 nails



"Cat 'O Nine Tails"

Materials Needed:

- 18 - 1" strips of brown vinyl
- 2 - 6 inch pieces of 1 inch dowel
- 2 - tacks

Tools Needed:

- A saw
- scissors

