

ESV). He chose to take our suffering because it brings Him joy to bring us to God. He endured the darkness of that first, very dark, “black” Friday for our eternal joy and salvation.

Because He loved you so much, He went through this darkness. And that’s also why this day was so very, very good.

Imagine now that you have tens of thousands of dollars in credit card debt racked up through foolish Black Friday buying habits. You have no way to pay it off, and the interest only compounds. Then suddenly, somebody steps forward and takes all your debt on his own account. You are completely cleared of your growing mountain of debt. Imagine the feeling of freedom and gratitude!

In reality, an eternally greater debt has been paid. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (**Romans 6:23**). This is the Black Friday deal!

BRIGHT SUNDAY

Sunday morning, “when the sun had risen,” some women went to Jesus’ tomb to anoint His body with spices (**Mark 16:2**). They saw two angels “in shining garments” (**Luke 24:4**) whose “appearance was like lightning” (**Matthew 28:3**, ESV).

Are you catching the brightness of Sunday morning? These angels dispelled the darkness of Friday as they proclaimed history’s **BRIGHTEST** news ever. The Son was risen! He had risen from the dead!

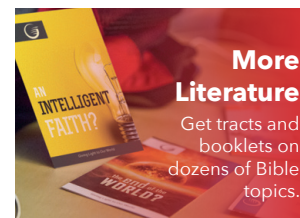
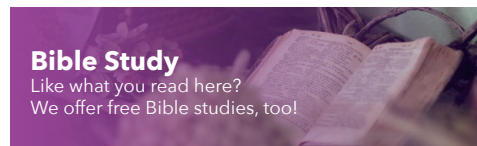
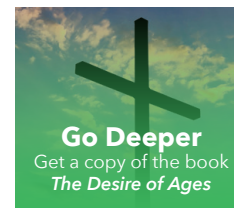
Jesus then appeared to the women, to the disciples, and finally, to more than 500 eyewitnesses (see **1 Corinthians 15:6**).

Friend, Jesus conquered death for you. Jesus lives forevermore. He is the eternal Friend of sinners. He is your glorified Lord of Lords, and our soon-coming Savior.

Now THAT is something worth waking up early for, investing our money in, talking about, thinking about.... You get the idea. Minus the frenzied screaming and pushing, let’s put it all on the line for Jesus who did so much for us.

Remember: eternal life with Jesus is a gift infinitely greater than any Christmas gift. And it’s free. If we will confess our sins and repent, He will forgive us and cleanse us (**1 John 1:9**). Will you pray to Him now?

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Human behavior can be strange. Red-faced and with fists clenched, a motorist screams at the top of his lungs, like a toddler throwing a tantrum. He zooms past a vehicle that is moving far too slowly for his temper to tolerate. Or how about the puzzling scene of a star-struck fan who encounters her favorite teen idol? His presence reduces her to a shaking, weeping, emotional mess.

But the ultimate display of cultural craziness is Black Friday. It's hard to miss. The insane fervor, the ravenous push—yes, a literal PUSH—to acquire... material possessions... at a discount?

You've seen the clips online. You've watched, stunned, to see mayhem and madness take over, as a tsunami of adrenaline-rushed consumers put it all on the line for their desired bargain.

You could call it mob psychology. You could call it greed and the collapse of decency. Or you could call it the cleverest marketing scheme in the history of the world!

It's Black Friday—the highly profitable day when retailers hope to go heavily into the black in their profit or loss for the year.

Unfortunately, what gets lost in the shuffle (or should we say, stampede) is an even more profitable “black Friday,” which took place 2000 years ago.

THE ORIGINAL ‘BLACK’ FRIDAY

Did you know that when Jesus died on the cross the sky literally went dark? It was dark for three hours that Friday afternoon (Luke 23:44-45)! It was the original black Friday.

We commonly refer to that day as Good Friday. On that day an innocent man's closest friends deserted Him, wicked religious leaders abused Him, and professional Roman torturers put Him to death. It was indeed a dark, black day for Jesus. He sadly acknowledged this fact to His persecutors: “this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53).

For Jesus, the deepest darkness on that black Friday was not the rejection of His friends. It wasn't the physical pain of being whipped, beaten, pierced, and crucified. There was an even deeper, darker experience. The Bible tells us, “Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying... ‘God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” (Matthew 27:46).

What a heart-wrenching cry from the Son of God. We stand in silent wonder at the thought.

What was happening to Jesus? What had he done to deserve this? What elicited this cry of agony to His Father?

We return to a scene the evening before the crucifixion. Jesus was in a garden called Gethsemane.

“And being in agony.... His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). This is astounding! Jesus' blood was being shed even before the arrest, torture, and execution began?

We fast-forward to the scene right after Jesus breathed His last breath on the cross. His body hung lifeless, although the others being crucified were still alive (see John 19:30-34). It normally took days to die on a cross. What killed Jesus so quickly?

Jesus was suffering from an affliction worse than the most excruciating physical pain imaginable. We see it in Gethsemane, and we see it on the cross. The Bible says that God the Father “delivered Him up for us all” (Romans 8:32). Or in Jesus' words, He felt completely “forsaken” by God.

The human mind can't fully grasp the seriousness of this. The most intimate union in the universe—the eternal unity between the Almighty Father and His Son—was being ripped apart.

Imagine, for a moment, the person about whom you care most deeply. Now imagine the feeling that would seize you if that person were to forsake you completely. Maybe this has happened to you. Now multiply that horrific feeling infinitely (because of Jesus' eternal and infinite union with His

Father). That's a glimpse into the emotional and psychological pain Jesus felt in these moments of darkness! By comparison, His physical wounds were almost nothing.

THE DEBT IS CANCELED!

Remember that Jesus “committed no sin” and was “without sin” (1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 4:15). His life was dedicated solely to healing, teaching, and saving. He lived for others, not for Himself. He was totally “unblemished and spotless” (1 Peter 1:19, NASB).

Yet this fully innocent, selfless person “bore our sins in His own body on the tree...” (1 Peter 2:24). “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

It's impossible to imagine! The guilt and shame for ALL the sins of EVERY person who ever lived, laid on one man? It's inconceivable what He must have gone through on that dark day.

Why didn't He just leave us to the consequences of our own sin? Hebrews 12:2 tells us that He “endured the cross” “for the joy that was set before Him.” What joy is this, exactly? “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18,