

The Cross

Note: This resource can be done at one time, but may be more helpful broken into 3 conversations. If so, conversation 1 would cover "Before the Cross", "What is the Gospel" and "The Cross in Me". Conversation 2 would cover "The Cross with Us". Conversation 3 would cover "The Cross to Others" and concluding comments.

Ask yourself...what did Jesus accomplish on the Cross? What can you think of? Is that all?

Paul's message centered on the Cross of Christ:

- Galatians 6:14a, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..."
- 1 Corinthians 2:2, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

Before the Cross...in the Old Testament

The problems of reconciliation were temporarily overcome under the Old Covenant in Old Testament times through a sacrificial offering system which God progressively revealed. Prescribed offerings may be classified in a twofold way:

- First, offerings which were propitiatory, for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness of sin and restoration to God. The Day of Atonement was to be observed once each year by the whole nation of Israel (Le. 16:1-34). It was to be a time of great mourning for sin (31), with repentance, confession, forgiveness and cleansing. Trespass offerings were for specific guilt or blame which any one incurs (as Le. 5:5-6, 7, 15-16).
- Secondly, offerings which expressed communion and fellowship with God: Burnt offerings (Le. 1:3, 10, 14), peace offerings (Le. 7:11-15, 16-17), and grain offerings (Le. 2:1-16).

These sacrificial offerings were designed to make a profound impression upon each individual participating and upon the whole nation Israel. They demonstrated that:

- 1) *Sin is a dreadfully serious matter against God;*
- 2) *Sin is an offense to God's sense of values with unchanging hatred;*
- 3) *Realization of guilt and true humiliation was necessary;*
- 4) *Man needed something tangible to bring realization and be an object for faith;*
- 5) *God has a right to full supremacy and devotion;*
- 6) *God delights in peaceful fellowship and communion; and*
- 7) *Tithes and offerings to God are a privileged obligation.*

But as the author of Hebrews wrote in Hebrews 10:1-4,

"The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for

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their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."

But then Jesus came, and the author of Hebrews writes in Hebrews 9:27-28,

"Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."

What is the Gospel?

Throughout the New Testament there are these Gospel nuggets, where Paul and others described in a variety of ways...the Gospel, the Good News about Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 15:1-8 is an example of one. Read it now.

This Good News fits in the overall story of God. Some have stated it this way, unfolding in 4 parts: **Creation, Fall, Redemption, New Creation.**

In a nutshell Tim Keller states that the Gospel is this: *"God Himself has come to rescue and renew Creation through and in the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf."*

Within that overall story is a hinge point – a hinge point within Redemption: that is the Cross. This is the place where the cost, effects, enslavements, and the separating power of sin meet the wrath, work, justice, mercy, power and love of God. Thomas Chalmers wrote, *"The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one."*

Our hope is to awaken a trust-filled love in you. This trust-filled love should govern your active response to what Jesus has accomplished in you, with us, and through us to others.

The Cross In Me

So what is it exactly that Jesus accomplished on the Cross?

Jesus was sent by the Father – the first Missionary came from heaven ("As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." John 17:18 NIV). We're going to focus on 5 images – there are at least a dozen different images or pictures that the New Testament uses (& they overlap a lot), so this isn't an exhaustive list, but a very strong start. Jesus the Missionary is our...

1. Our Lamb or our Sacrifice (Substitutionary Atonement)

- a. There were two declarations that John the Baptist made about Jesus – 1) that He is the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and 2) that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.
- b. Upon the Cross our sin was laid upon the sinless Jesus. The prophetic picture of the Cross in Isaiah 53:6 says, "We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all." He was the sacrificial Lamb led to

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sacrifice in our behalf. Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For our sake [God] made him who had no sin to be sin for us..." Jesus became in that moment our sin. He took it in and on. He wore it. And He willingly sacrificed Himself for us. He endured the shame of it as Hebrews 12:2-3 makes plain.

- c. Implications: Paul humbly acknowledged in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." The sacrifice for my sins has been made. I live in trust that my sin has been dealt with between me and God.

2. Our Victor (Christus Victor)

- a. Jesus is the great Champion that has defeated sin, death, hell, the grave and Satan with his demons.
- b. Listen to Paul's great shout to the Colossians 2:13-15, "*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*" Just a chapter before Paul had driven home to them in Colossians 1:10-14, "*so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*" Jesus has defeated death. Jesus has defeated sin. Jesus has defeated hell. Jesus has defeated Satan and his demons. Satan is a tempter and the father of lies. He is an accuser, manipulator and deceiver, but resist and he must flee.
- c. You are known. You are loved. You are safe. You are free. Jesus is your Champion and your Shield.

3. Our Wrath-Swallower (Propitiation)

- a. All of our sin sits before us. It is evident to us and God. God's wrath is His just and right response to our sin. His wrath is due to all those who are disobedient. It is the right response of one who hates sin and lives in perpetual pure holiness. It is the right response for our rebellion, our selfishness, and sick pride that we think we are good enough without God. For example, Leviticus 26:27-28 describes, "If in spite of this you still do not listen to me (the Lord) but continue to be hostile toward me, then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will punish you for your sins seven times over." God's wrath rises before us as a tidal wave – it is awesome, fear-inspiring, and complete pure judgment. We stand on the shore at risk of receiving our due reward for our sin. Jesus stands beside us and waits as the enormously high and wide wave rises up before us to

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destine us for judgment and hell. If we confess to Him our sins and trust His work on the Cross, He looks from us to the wave, opens wide His mouth and swallows the wrath of God.

- b. I John 4:10 says, *"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice (propitiation) for our sins."* Romans 3:23-25 says, *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement (propitiation), through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—".* If we fail to repent, Jesus spoke of hell – the place of God's unending active wrath – more than anyone else in the Bible.
- c. God's demands for justice have been met. I need not fear the spiritual consequences of that for which I have repented. Sin, the thing that stands as an impediment in my relationship with God, has been removed!

4. **Our Cleanser (Expiation)**

- a. Jesus' blood is like bleach. His death on the Cross is the ultimate cleanser of sin, removing the effects and stains of it from our lives, whether exercised by us or by someone else upon us.
- b. In Leviticus 16 on the Day of Atonement, there are two lambs presented. One is the propitiatory sacrifice, slaughtered for the sins of the people. The other is the expiation. The sins are whispered into the ear of the animal and it is led away into the wilderness, separating forever the sin and defilement/shame from the people. Listen to I John 1:7-9, *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* This is the beauty of the picture of what baptism does. That water doesn't cleanse the dirt and filth of sin off of us, but it gives a picture of what Jesus' blood does. It represents that cleansing. This is why when Paul preached in Jerusalem he told the people in Acts 22:16, *"And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name."* God is calling to you in Hebrews 10:22, *"let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."*
- c. When Jesus died on the Cross He declared, "It is finished." It's an accounting term for the removal of a debt. One term stamped a word over the debt. You could still see the old debt, but it was covered. This word erases the debt, declaring "paid in full". There's no record, remnant, or mark from the old sin – ours committed, or those committed against us.

5. **Our Adopter**

- a. This image is less clearly connected to the Cross than the other 4 but the idea of God's adoption of us only occurs because of the Cross.

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- b. Galatians 4:4-5 makes clear, *“But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.”* The idea of redemption is that you have been bought out of one way of life and placed into another way of life. Our new way of life is adoption. It’s God as Father. It’s Christ as brother. It’s Church as family. John 1:12-13 says, *“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”*
- c. You have the perfect father! He knows you perfectly. He loves you perfectly. His resources are infinite. His plans are made just for you. Life is lived in the arms of your loving Heavenly Father!

So...by trusting Jesus and what He accomplished on the Cross, I have a

- **New Nature** – 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”
- **New Identity** – 2 Corinthians 5:18, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ...”
- **New Purpose** – 2 Corinthians 5:20, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:21, *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”* – This is the the work of the Cross in me and in you.

The Cross affects **me**.

So, in light of all this, what prompts your obedience to God? Love and trust...or fear and pride?

The Cross With Us

The Cross doesn’t just impact us as individuals though. It impacts us as a community of God! Our reconciliation isn’t just to the Heavenly Father. Our reconciliation is to the people of God. In fact...all those places in the New Testament that include lines like “one another” and “each other” are the outworking of the Cross into our lives together. We get to be part of how these things happen!!

Listen to this amazing picture in Ephesians 2:11-22...

“Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called ‘uncircumcised’ by those who call themselves ‘the circumcision’ (which is done in the body by human hands)— remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

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For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

Look at the pictures in this:

- One new humanity – reconciliation of completely distinct and different types of people (culture, history, tradition, even hostility) under one banner: Jesus.
- Civic Life: Fellow citizens – no longer strangers and foreigners.
- Family Life: Members of his household – joining with the saints of old into one family.
- Religious Life: A holy temple – built together as a common dwelling place of God.

In Chi Alpha, we say that We are a Family and an Army. This is an outworking of the Gospel, because of what Christ does with us for, in and through one another.

What's an implication then?

For example, 2 Corinthians 10:2-5 says,

"I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Think about this example. We do warfare on behalf of one another speaking to one another the truths of the Cross to combat the lies of the Enemy and of this world. Much of the battle is learning the truth, trusting the truth, and obeying the truth. We can serve by reminding one another, "Hey, don't forget what Jesus accomplished on the Cross!"

So, we have to ask ourselves:

- How does the gospel bring good news in this situation?
- What implications does Jesus' death on the Cross specifically have on this person in this situation?
- What do they (or I) need to hear right now?
- How is Jesus better than what we have right now, what we're believing right now, or what we want right now?

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See...we often approach life's situations not from pleasing Jesus, but from appeasing our idols. If our idol is comfort, we approach resolving a situation by doing the most comfortable thing possible. If our idol is pleasure, we choose the relationship that will bring the most and quickest pleasure. If our idol is being accepted by others, we'll make decisions that will give us the quickest approval we can get. Too often we are looking for someone or something to provide something that only God can provide. But what if Jesus is a Better Comforter? What if Jesus gives Better Pleasure? What if Jesus' Approval could actually be Better?

Have you ever wondered why we complain about everything? I think there are two main reasons:

- We forget that we deserve death, hell and the grave because of our sin.
- We forget what Jesus accomplished on the Cross and so we are not thankful.

So...we as the Body of Christ serve a purpose to one another, helping each other remember:

- Who is God/Jesus in this situation? (He is the Better Comforter.)
- What has He done for them in the Cross? (He died to be their Cleanser, Adopter, Lamb of God...)
- Who are they in light of what He's done? (He has given them a new nature, identity, and purpose as specifically can be seen in this situation here, here, and here.)
- Ok...now that we have all this truth...what should they do now?

The hero of everyone's story is not you, is not Chi Alpha, but is Jesus. He is Better.

The Cross affects us.

Do you trust what Jesus accomplished on the Cross to speak it into the lives of fellow Christ-followers?

The Cross To Others

The implications of the Cross aren't just in me, or with us...but to others.

The cool thing is that this same message applies to everyone, whether they love Jesus yet or not. No one can have the fulfillment they're looking for from life, people, or circumstances when that can only come through Jesus. What He accomplished in you and with us is now to go to others.

What's our typical response? We're scared out of our minds!

Listen to Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:5

"For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.' Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age?"

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Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: 'Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.' And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power."

God has never been looking for this all to rest on how smart or powerful or effective you are. Don't worry! It's His wisdom. It's His power.

Talk less, listen more.

Listen to what the Spirit is saying (His wisdom, His power).

Think about the big story – Creation, Fall, Redemption, New Creation.

- Creation – in what do they find their identity or sense of significance or purpose?
- Fall – whom or what is the fundamental problem they blame for the things that are broken in their lives?
- Redemption – whom or what are they looking to as their savior to rescue or deliver them?
- New Creation – what does transformation look like and what is their ultimate hope for the future?

Remember, Jesus the Savior accomplished for them in the Cross a new nature (to overcome their problem), a new identity, and a new purpose (to walk out that hope).

The Cross affects others.

Do you...will you trust the wisdom and power of God, accomplished on the Cross for the transformation of your life, your friends' lives, and those you don't yet know?

The Gospel of John repeats 1 word again and again: Believe. It is often the hardest thing to do. Will I believe Jesus is who He says He is and did what He said He did on the Cross?

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If you believe Jesus the Missionary is our Adopter, Cleanser, Victor, Sacrificial Lamb and Wrath-Swallower...

How does what Jesus accomplished on the Cross affect your...

- ...relationship with your dad?
- ...worst sin?
- ...future?
- ...greatest sadness?
- ...biggest dream?
- ...confusing boss?
- ..._____? (You fill in the blank)

How does what Jesus accomplished on the Cross affect your conversation with your friend about...

- ...their relationship with their boyfriend/girlfriend?
- ...their choices with respect to school?
- ...their painfully bad decisions in their family situations?
- ...what happened to them when they were a child?
- ...the horrible thing their mom said to them?
- ..._____? (You fill in the blank)

The Cross affects **everything**.