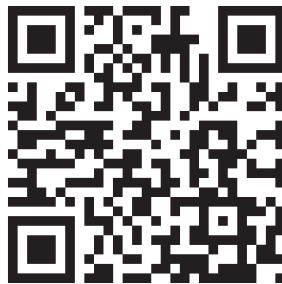


Chapter 1

WHAT DID JESUS DO FOR ME ON THE CROSS?



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John Newton was the embodiment of a ruthless man. As a slave trader, he became rich at the expense of others without considering the suffering and pain he was causing them. Countless people lost their lives at his hands. Yet this man later wrote one of the most famous Christian songs of all time: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see." How could someone with such a dark past write these words?

On May 10, 1748, Newton was caught in a life-threatening storm on the high seas. In desperation, he cried out to Jesus and experienced an encounter with the grace of God that completely changed his heart. This man, who was formerly a merciless perpetrator himself, became a person who passionately campaigned for the abolition of the slave trade.

His life is a powerful reminder for us that no one is too far from God's grace and that no amount of guilt is too great for Jesus to bear. This amazing grace was demonstrated on the cross of Jesus, where He restored the broken relationship between God and humans. The cross is the ultimate sign of the fact that God gave everything to save us.

The cross of Jesus is the center of your faith

How did a brutal instrument of torture become a fashionable accessory that can be worn as jewelry around the neck or be printed on a T-shirt? No other symbol polarizes as much as the cross. For some it is just jewelry, for others a provocation - for you as a Christian it is the center of your faith.

On the cross, Jesus performed the greatest deed in human history. There He voluntarily bore the burden of the world - your guilt, your illness, your death. Your faith begins at the cross and remains anchored there forever. On your journey with God, you will return to this place again and again to marvel anew at what Jesus has done for you there.

Because everything you are and everything you have is based on the incomprehensible grace of God that Jesus gave you on the cross.

No wonder the four Gospels ultimately lead to the Passion story - the suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. Everything He did came down to this moment when He said: "It is finished."

Why did Jesus have to become man and die on the cross? He Himself explained it this way:

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Matthew 20:28 | The Bible, NLT

The cross is more than a symbol - it is a monument to the greatest act of love of all time. Here Jesus took all our guilt that separates us from God upon Himself in order to reconcile us with God. In doing so, He overcame the separation between us and God that came into the world through sin.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Colossians 1:19-20 | The Bible, NIV

The seven stages of Jesus' suffering

For His disciples, the last 18 hours of Jesus' life were like an unstoppable, brutal downward spiral. Betrayed, interrogated, mocked, cruelly tortured, and executed - for them, this was the lowest point. For Jesus, however, it was all part of God's plan. He knew that every bloodshed along the way had a deeper meaning.

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 | The Bible, NIV

On His path of suffering, Jesus shed His blood seven times - and each of these stages represents a gift to you. It was the price for your redemption, for your salvation, for your freedom. For Jesus, the cross was the worst thing to endure. For you, it is the best thing that has ever happened to you.

Jesus sweat blood

On the night before His crucifixion, the whole weight of the world rested on Jesus. He knew that the moment was near for which He had come into this world - the moment that would change everything for humanity. In the Garden of Gethsemane ("oil press" in English), He experienced an inner struggle so intense that His sweat dripped onto the ground like blood.

Under the unimaginable pressure of taking your guilt and the guilt of the whole world upon Himself, Jesus sweat blood. Doctors explain that this could be due to a rare disorder called haemhidrosis, in which blood vessels burst under extreme stress and blood comes out with the sweat.

*[...] "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."
[...] And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.*

Luke 22:42+44 | The Bible, NIV

But this "cup of suffering" was more than an image of Jesus' anguish - it was filled with the faults, fears, and sorrows of all humans. Jesus was willing to drink it for you. He took on your burdens, your deepest fears, and your pressures so that you could be free.

Jesus was mocked, accused, and innocently beaten

Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and said, "Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?"

Matthew 26:67-68 | The Bible, NIV

Jesus endured mockery, beatings, and the deepest shame - all innocently. By being beaten until He was covered in blood, by being mocked and abused: He bore what we actually deserved. Why did He take all this upon Himself? So that we no longer have to bear the shame ourselves. He took everything that is against us upon Himself.

We had broken the Law many ways. Those sins were held against us by the Law. That Law had writings which said we were sinners. But now He has destroyed that writing by nailing it to the cross.

Colossians 2:14 | The Bible, NLV

Jesus not only took the mockery upon Himself, but also every accusation that the enemy could ever bring against us. Again and again, the devil, the "accuser", whispers thoughts of failure and guilt to us. But these accusations no longer have any power over you because Jesus already bore them for you. God does not accuse you.

Jesus was found guilty and carried His cross

Jesus was innocently tried, interrogated, and finally condemned (cf. Matthew 27:22-26). But He did not just bear a human judgment - He took upon Himself the judgment that you and I deserved for our sins. For the punishment for our guilt is death. But Jesus, who was without sin, voluntarily took this death sentence upon Himself so that we could receive mercy. Bleeding, He carried His heavy wooden cross until His earthly body could no longer bear the weight, and someone had to help Him by carrying the cross the rest of the way (cf. Luke 23:26).

Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).

John 19:17 | The Bible, NIV

Because Jesus bore the judgment for us, God no longer accuses you. You are acquitted. God does not condemn you but gives you a clear conscience. You can stand before Him without fear and guilt - redeemed and liberated by His grace.

Jesus was flogged

Jesus was brutally flogged by the Roman soldiers (John 19:1) - a punishment that was so cruel that many victims died as a result. Jesus' body was covered with bloody welts and open wounds. Yet His suffering had a purpose: peace and healing for us humans.

"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."

1 Peter 2:24 | The Bible, NIV

Jesus not only took on your sin, but also your pain, sickness, and wounds so that you can be healed.

Jesus wore a crown of thorns

Without knowing it, the soldiers were fulfilling a prophecy when they placed a crown of thorns on Jesus' head (Matthew 27:29-30). The thorns, a symbol of the curse of sin (Genesis 3:17-18), dug deep into His skin. Jesus took this curse upon Himself so that you can live in freedom and blessing.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole." He redeemed us in order that the

blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Galatians 3:13-14 | The Bible, NIV

The crown of thorns stands for the fact that Jesus took the curse of sin upon Himself in order to give you access to God's blessing and freedom. Perhaps you recognize a pattern in your family - an illness that has dragged on for generations, recurring conflicts, early deaths, or addictions. Jesus took every curse upon Himself so that you can be set free and live free from them.

Jesus was nailed to the cross

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

John 15:13 | The Bible, NIV

On the cross, Jesus provided the ultimate proof of love: Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified with nails through His hands and feet (John 19:18). His hands, which brought healing and blessing, were pierced to redeem all your evil deeds. His feet, which walked the path of God's love, were pierced to renew your ways, and give you a new direction.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Romans 5:8-9 | The Bible, NIV

Jesus let Himself be nailed to the cross for you so that you would be free from guilt and free for a new life. His blood has opened the way to God for you and shows you that you do not have to earn anything. His love is a gift.

Jesus was pierced with a spear

"It is finished!" (John 19:30). With these words, Jesus opened the way to God. But to make sure that He was really dead, a Roman soldier stabbed Him in the side with a spear (John 19:34). Blood and water flowed from the wound - an impressive symbol. In the same way as water and blood flow at a birth, this points to your rebirth. Through the death of Jesus, you become a new person.

Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

John 5:24 | The Bible, NIV

The blood stands for the forgiveness of your guilt, the water for the cleansing and the new life that Jesus gives you. Through Him you are free, washed clean of all guilt, and can be born again.

— 00 ACTION STEP —

How would you like to respond to Jesus' selfless act of love? If you would like to entrust your life to Him out of gratitude, you can pray the following prayer:

"Lord Jesus Christ, come into my life. Forgive me for excluding you from my life and for not believing in you until today. Forgive me for all my sins. I thank you for giving your life for me on the cross so that from now on I can live free from sin and curses. I give you control of my life and trust you to guide me step by step. My life shall now be yours. Thank you for the new life and peace you give me. Amen."

Experience freedom through the exchange at the cross

Jesus bore everything for you – your guilt, your sins, your burdens. On the cross, He gave Himself up to set you free. His blood washed away your sins, and His love paved the way for you. He took the punishment that should have been yours upon Himself – so that you can live in peace. Jesus became a human being so that you could become a son or daughter of God.

Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past.

Romans 3:24-25 | The Bible, NLT

The cross is the place where a supernatural exchange took place. Jesus took your suffering upon Himself so that you may experience healing. He was wounded so that you may be healed. He was abandoned so that you may be accepted forever. He died so that you may have an abundant life.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53:5 | The Bible, NIV

And this is precisely what you can experience in prayer: You can consciously take what is not from God to the cross – and from Him receive what He has in store for you. Bring Him your guilt, and He gives you forgiveness. Bring Him your fear, and He gives you peace. Leave your weakness with Him, and He fills you with His strength. Let go of what weighs you down – and accept the divine exchange!

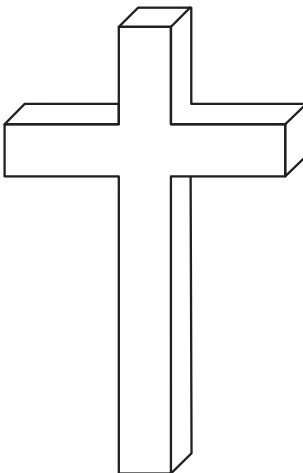
The blood of Jesus is enough. It is your foundation for you to be able to come to Him with everything. His death gives you life. His freedom replaces your captivity. That is the exchange at the cross!

– 00 ACTION STEP —————

Write down all the ungodly things you want to give up to Jesus at the cross on the left side of the cross.

- To do this, once again go through the seven stages of Jesus' Passion.
- Write down sin, mockery, curses, sickness, death, fears, pressure, etc. and anything else that comes to mind that you want to give Him.
- On the left side, write down what you find unlovable about yourself.
- Write down what separates you from God.

Now, on the right side of the cross, write down in keywords what divine things Jesus gives you (e.g., courage, love, dignity, healing, etc.). Use the list on page 22-23.

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Jesus transformed (mortal) fear into love and courage

Jesus took away our fear and gave us courage and confidence through His victory.

In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

John 16:33b | The Bible, NIV

Jesus turned mockery into honor and dignity

Jesus bore our shame so that we may stand in His glory and dignity.

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:6 | The Bible, NIV

Jesus turned poverty into wealth

He gave up His heavenly riches to provide us with everything we need.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9 | The Bible, NIV

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Romans 8:32 | The Bible, NIV

Jesus transformed illness and pain into healing and health

Through His wounds He gave us healing for body, soul, and spirit.

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering [...] by his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53:4a+5b | The Bible, NIV

Jesus transformed loneliness into fellowship

Jesus opened the door to intimate fellowship with God and for one another.

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

Revelation 3:20 | The Bible, NIV

Jesus turned guilt into forgiveness

Our guilt was wiped out forever through His deed on the cross.

He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

Colossians 2:14 | The Bible, NIV

Jesus transformed captivity and determinations into freedom

He set us free from all inner bonds.

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

John 8:36 | The Bible, NIV

Jesus transformed pressure and distress into lightness

He gave us rest and relieved us of unbearable burdens.

[...] for I am gentle and humble in heart [...] For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:29a+30 | The Bible, NIV

Jesus turned despair and grief into comfort

He brings hope and comfort where there used to be pain and darkness.

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim

freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, [...] to comfort all who mourn,

Isaiah 61:1+2b | The Bible, NIV

Jesus turned curse into blessing

He bore the curse on the cross so that we can receive God's blessing.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Galatians 3:13-14 | The Bible, NIV

Jesus turned death into life

He conquered death and has given us abundant life.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:10 | The Bible, NIV

– ✞ EXPERIENCE: EXPERIENCE THE EXCHANGE AT THE CROSS —————

Use these prayer instructions and take time to go through them. Let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit, pause, listen to what you hear, and consciously say the words.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

2 Corinthians 5:17 | The Bible, NIV

Step 1: Invite

"Holy Spirit, I invite you to guide me. Jesus, I come to you at your cross."

Step 2: Recognize

Pray that the Holy Spirit will show you what you should bring to the cross. What in you is broken, hurt, afraid, sinful? Add the keywords to the graphic on page 18.

Listen: Listen to God and let Him give you what is on His heart. Try to find out what the next step could be for you.

Step 3: Confess negative feelings, hurts, sin

What does this brokenness feel like? Where do you feel it?

Step 4: Let go

Step in front of the cross and give these things to Jesus. You can do this inwardly or in a specific place (by a tree outside, by the lake, in a room near the wastepaper basket, ...).

Step 5: Receive the new

Now some space has become free in you. What is the new thing you will now receive from Jesus to fill this space?

Step 6: Feeling positive

How does it feel? What does it look like? What is this new thing called? Circle the words in the graphic on the right that describe what Jesus has given you.

Step 7: Accept the new

Pray: "Jesus, I thank you for everything new you are creating in me. I accept this."

Examples of exchange at the cross:

I bring you my rejection - you give me your acceptance.

I bring you my pain - you give me your healing.

I bring you my guilt - you give me your forgiveness.

I bring you my despair - you give me your comfort.

I bring you my brokenness - you give me your restoration.

I bring you my anger - you give me your peace.

I bring you my fear - you give me your security.

I bring you my old life - you give me your new life in the power of the resurrection.

Further reading for your in-depth study

- ***“Live like never before!”*** - *Leo and Susanna Bigger* - The five most important areas of life through the lens of the Bible (faith, relationships, health, resources, work).
- ***“Pray like never before!”*** - *Leo and Susanna Bigger* - Practical guide to 31 different powerful prayer styles
- ***“Rediscovering Communion”*** - *Leo and Susanna Bigger* - Integrate communion into your everyday life with 31 practical ideas for living in God’s power.

All books are available at: store.icf.church