

Lesson 2 — The Cross

The Wheel of Faith

Big Idea

The cross is the fullest revelation of God's love, where justice is satisfied, mercy is revealed, and Christ gives Himself completely for humanity—forever uniting Himself with us for our salvation.

Why This Study Matters

Many people speak of the cross as a necessary event, but few grasp its depth or permanence. When the cross is reduced to a moment in history or a transaction to explain, its power to awaken repentance, assurance, and trust is diminished. This study restores the cross to its biblical place—not merely as something to be analyzed, but as something to be beheld—so that love, faith, and obedience flow from what Christ has already accomplished.

Opening Frame — Why the Cross Stands at the Center

Introduction

God's love is revealed in many ways, but Scripture consistently points us to the cross as its clearest expression.

Group Question:

- When you hear the word *cross*, what meaning or image comes to mind first?

1. Why do we need the cross?

Read: Romans 6:23

Reflection Questions:

- What is sin?
- Why does sin require a real solution rather than being overlooked?
- What is the gift of God according to the text?

Theological guardrail: Our legal system today is a reflection of God's government. Sin [breaking law] demands justice. The bible says that while God is a merciful God he is also a God of Justice.

2. Christ Our Substitute

Read: Hebrews 4:15; Isaiah 53:6; 2 Corinthians 5:21

Key Truths:

- Christ was sinless; death had no rightful claim on Him.
- Our sins were credited to Christ, and His righteousness is offered to us.

Group Questions:

- Why is it important that Jesus was without sin?
- What does it mean that our sins were placed on Christ?

Theological guardrail: He had to be sinless so that he could take ours. This was a deal struck in heaven. If he remained sinless then God would let Jesus trade places with us. This would satisfy justice in heaven!

3. The Cross and the Second Death

Read: Revelation 2:11; Matthew 27:46, Hebrews 2:9

Compare: Psalm 22:1,2,6,8,9,14,15

Key Truths:

- Scripture distinguishes between the first death and the second death.
- Christ entered into the deepest consequence of sin so we would never have to.

Group Questions:

- What does Christ's cry from the cross reveal about what He endured?
- How does this deepen your understanding of His love?
- In Psalm 22 how does verse 9 compare to the other verses?
- How does Hebrews 2:9 describe the purpose of Jesus becoming a man {lower than the angels}?

Companion reading: *"So dreadful does sin appear to Him, so great is the weight of guilt which He must bear, that He is tempted to fear it will shut Him out forever from His Father's love. Feeling how terrible is the wrath of God against transgression, He exclaims, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." "But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the*

Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt."

Discuss above quote from the book Desire of Ages.

Theological guardrail: Psalm 22 verse 9 is demonstrating his faith in God despite the experience he is having revealed in the other verses. This segment is to show that he experienced something more than just a mere mortal death, but a soul destroying separation from God that the lost will feel at the end of time. He is experiencing this so that we do not have to.

4. "A Son Is Given" — The Permanence of the Gift

Read: Isaiah 9:6; John 3:16; John 1:14

Key Truths:

- The incarnation represents an eternal commitment, not a temporary mission.
- Christ remains fully God and fully human forever.

Group Questions:

- What does it mean that the Son was *given*, not merely sent?
 - How does this shape your sense of worth and God's nearness?
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5. Christ-Centered Reflection — Beholding the Cross

Companion Reading — *Steps to Christ*

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of man has been lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life. All who have ever lived upon the earth have felt the deadly sting of 'that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan.' The fatal effects of sin can be removed only by the provision that God has made. The Israelites saved their lives by looking upon the uplifted serpent. That look implied faith. They lived because they believed God's word and trusted in the means provided for their recovery. So the sinner may look to Christ and live. He receives pardon through faith in the atoning sacrifice."

— *Steps to Christ*

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:55

Group Questions

- What does it mean to *look* and live rather than to strive and earn?
- How does this illustration clarify faith in relation to the cross?

- How does Jesus take away the sting of death?

Theological guardrail:

- Are you resting in what Christ has done, or reaching for something to add?
- Is faith being described as trust or as effort?

Closing Emphasis

The cross reveals both the depth of our need and the greater depth of God's love. When Christ is lifted up, hearts are drawn, faith is awakened, and rest replaces striving.

Experiential Reality — The Cross

A 7-Day Journey of Beholding and Transformation

The cross is not first meant to be explained, defended, or analyzed. It is meant to be **beheld** and believed.

Scripture teaches that transformation comes not by effort, but by vision and belief:

“We all, with open face beholding... are changed” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

This seven-day journey is designed to help us **see the cross clearly**, allow it to **reveal our need**, and let Christ's sacrifice reshape how we live and trust.

Day 1 — Behold the Love Displayed

Scripture: John 3:16; Romans 5:8

Practice:

Read the passage slowly. Emphasize the words *gave*, *loved*, and *while we were yet sinners*.

Sit quietly with this truth:

God loved me before I ever responded to Him.

Reflection:

Where have I believed—subtly or openly—that I must change first in order to be loved?

Prayer time: ask God to help this truth sink deeper in your mind and heart

Day 2 — Behold the Cost of Sin

Scripture: Isaiah 53:4–6; Romans 6:23

Practice:

Read Isaiah 53 personally, replacing plural language with “me” where appropriate.

Notice:

- the weight
- the substitution
- the seriousness

Reflection:

If sin required such a sacrifice, how lightly have I treated it in my own life?

(Not to condemn — but to awaken clarity.)

Prayer Time: Today ask God to forgive you of sin, and then thank God thoughtfully for letting Jesus bear your sin.

Day 3 — Behold the Substitute

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:6

Practice:

Reflect on the idea of **imputation** — your sin placed on Christ, His righteousness offered to you.

Say aloud (or silently):

“He stood where I should stand.”

Reflection:

What would it look like to stop standing in my own defense and rest fully in His?

Prayer time: spend some time thanking God for your substitute.

Day 4 — Behold the Separation Christ Endured

Scripture: Matthew 27:46; Revelation 2:11 Read *Desire of Ages chapter 78 Calvary*

Practice:

Read this experience of Jesus slowly. Sit with the silence after it.

Do not try to explain it.
Let it remain weighty.

Reflection:

If Christ entered such darkness so I would never experience final separation, what does that say about His commitment to me?

Prayer time: Thank him today for the misery Jesus went through and ask God to help you better comprehend Christ's suffering.

Day 5 — Behold the Son Who Was Given

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6; John 1:14

Practice:

Reflect on the permanence of the incarnation — that Christ remains fully human and fully divine.

Consider:

He did not just visit humanity — He united Himself to it forever.

Reflection:

How does knowing that Christ remains “given” change the way I view my worth and God's nearness?

Prayer time: ask God to help you to better comprehend the magnitude of the gift of Jesus, and thank God for this everlasting gift?

Day 6 — Behold the Cross as My Only Ground

Scripture: Galatians 2:20; Romans 8:1

Practice:

Notice where you still rely on:

- self-performance
- guilt
- comparison
- fear

Then consciously release those grounds and rest in Christ's atonement.

Reflection:

Where have I added something to the cross that Christ never asked me to carry?

Prayer Time: ask God for forgiveness today for any self-reliance for salvation that you might have had outside of Christ. And pray that God would keep you mindful of your need of Jesus.

Day 7 — Behold and Rest

Scripture: Hebrews 12:2; Colossians 2:13–15

Practice:

Look back over the week. Do not evaluate progress. Notice **Christ**.

Thank Him specifically:

- for what He bore
- for what He gave
- for what He secured

Reflection:

How does resting in the cross reshape how I live, obey, and trust moving forward?

Prayer Time: spend time in prayer reflecting on the past weeks journey.

Experiential Summary Statement

The cross reveals both the depth of our need and the greater depth of God's love. When we behold Christ crucified, self-reliance dissolves, trust is awakened, and the heart finds rest in what has already been accomplished.