

CoreGroup Guide | Why Did Jesus Have to Die? – Part 2

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Welcome

This is the second week of our series, *Why Did Jesus Have to Die?* Each week of the series presents us with a different theory, or set of ideas, that attempts to answer that question: Why did Jesus have to die, and why does it matter to us today? The answer to the question this week is *to redeem us*, or to pay a *ransom* for our sins.

Remember, no one theory can fully capture the mystery of our faith; and yet, taken together these theories help us broaden our understanding of the cross and experience the hope of Easter in new and challenging ways. Let's begin with prayer as we jump into another week.

Opening Prayer

God of glory and God of grace. This is hard stuff! Thank you for the opportunity to wrestle with these concepts in a group that is also full of your glory and your grace. Help us to be curious and kind with each other today, open to all of the unique perspectives and experiences of each person in this group. Give us clarity in the spaces that feel murky, and courage to know that sometimes we just won't understand; and that's okay. It's in the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

Ice Breaker

If you could have one superhero power, what would it be? How would you use your power?

The Head

Besides the occasional movie thriller or news headline, "Ransom" is not a word we hear very often today. Neither is the word "Redeem," except for maybe using a coupon at the grocery store or a gift card at a restaurant. But in Biblical times, these words would have been more familiar, often used to describe the process of purchasing the freedom of a slave. To *redeem* a slave meant to pay a certain price to set them free, and that price was called a *ransom*.

Read these examples from scripture together as a group. Feel free to read different versions and translations as you compare and contrast these various Biblical references:

Mark 10:45

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

Exodus 13:13

"But every firstborn donkey you shall redeem with a sheep; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. Every firstborn male among your children you shall redeem."

1 Peter 1:18-19

“You know that you were ransomed from the futile conduct inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.”

1 Timothy 2:5-6

“For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all.”

- Which of these scriptures makes the most sense to you, and why?
- What questions do you have about each of these scriptures? Discuss with the group.
- How would you describe the concepts “to redeem” or “to ransom” in your own words?
- How does this theory shape your understanding of God and humanity?

The Heart

For Jesus to redeem each and everyone of us, we must be incredibly valued and loved. Even in the most broken and busted seasons of life, Jesus offers redemption, restoration, and healing through the ransom that was paid through his death. That is the foundation of this theory.

- What do you make of this explanation for Jesus’ death overall? What parts resonate with your soul, and what parts feel more disconnected?
- If Jesus paid a ransom to redeem us, to what or to whom was that ransom paid? How does your response to this question impact how you feel about this theory?
- What examples can you share, for your life or from the lives of others (keeping in mind confidentiality and privacy), of times you have witnessed God’s redemption?
- What specific songs, prayers, or worship practices reflect this theory of the cross?

The Hands

The truth of the matter is that we are only human, and humans mess up. We make mistakes; we say stupid things; we hurt the people we love through our words and actions (or lack thereof). But that is not the beginning of our story, nor the end. The cross is a symbol of that promise.

- Why might a person gravitate towards this particular understanding of Jesus’ death? What circumstances could make this theory feel relevant, comforting, or compelling?
- Look at our current world through the lens of this redeem/ransom view of Jesus’s death. What do you see that’s in need of God’s redemption through Christ?
- You are not God, of course, but how could you be a part of that redemptive process?
- What is one piece of this atonement theory that you will wrestle with this week?

Closing Prayer

As time allows, listen to the following worship song together as a group and reflect on the lyrics in light of our discussion today. Close by reading the final words of the song together.

[How Deep the Father's Love for Us](#)

Austin Stone Worship Live

Why should I gain from his reward?
I cannot give an answer.
But this I know with all my heart –
His wounds have paid my ransom.

Amen.

Going Deeper

This semester, each CoreGroup guide will include a memory verse that you can learn on your own or together with your group. The recommended memory verse for the *Why Did Jesus Have to Die* series is John 3:16-17 from the Common English Bible (CEB):

16 God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life. 17 God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

Here are three simple ways to practice memorizing a verse:

1. **Write it** (one time a day on a notecard, in your notes app, or on your mirror).
2. **Say it out loud** (at the same time daily - driving, brushing teeth, before bed).
3. **Pray it** (turn the verse into a one sentence prayer for yourself or someone you love).

Additional Resources

The Lenten devotional is a great companion to the sermon series and will offer both similar and fresh perspectives on the meaning of Jesus' death. If you haven't done so already, you can sign up to receive the devotional here: [Lenten Devotional 2026](#)

From Pastor Charity

Our shared practice for this sermon series is **Worship**. Remember to take a look at the *Start / Grow / Stretch* on the [Shared Practices](#) page and reflect on where you are and where you hope to go during this series. Try to be present in worship each Sunday during Lent and open yourself to the meaning of Jesus' death.