

CoreGroup Guide | Why Did Jesus Have to Die? – Part 3

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Welcome

As we begin week 3 of our series *Why Did Jesus Have to Die?*, we are looking at an explanation of Jesus' death that deals less with the "why" and more with the "how." This theory, known as the moral example or moral influence theory, follows the movement from head to heart to hands better than any we have discussed thus far. When we know Jesus died for us, our hearts are opened up in a new way that moves us to action.

Opening Prayer

Gracious and Holy God, as we reflect on these scriptures, open our hearts and minds. Teach us what it means to have the same mind as Christ. Help us listen carefully to your Spirit and to one another. May this time together shape us into people who reflect Christ's love in the world. We pray in the name of Jesus, who shows us the way. Amen.

Ice Breaker

What is the most embarrassing thing that has ever happened to you in public?

The Head

In the aftermath of Jesus' death, one way his disciples made sense of things was to encourage all of Jesus' followers to imitate the selflessness he displayed on the cross. Both Peter and Paul write in their letters about the power of Jesus' example and how we might emulate it in our lives.

1 Peter 2:21-23

You were called to this kind of endurance, because Christ suffered on your behalf. He left you an example so that you might follow in his footsteps. He committed no sin, nor did he ever speak in ways meant to deceive. When he was insulted, he did not reply with insults. When he suffered, he did not threaten revenge. Instead, he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.

Philippians 2:3-11

Don't do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves. Instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others. Adopt the attitude that was in Christ Jesus:

*Though he was in the form of God,
he did not consider being equal with God something to exploit.*

*But he emptied himself
by taking the form of a slave
and by becoming like human beings.
When he found himself in the form of a human,
he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.
Therefore, God highly honored him
and gave him a name above all names,
so that at the name of Jesus everyone
in heaven, on earth, and under the earth might bow
and every tongue confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

- What aspects of Jesus' humility and self-sacrifice stand out to you in these passages?
- What specific elements of Jesus' death demonstrate Jesus' attitude toward humanity?
- Why do you think early Christians connected Jesus' example on the cross with how they should treat others?
- How would you describe the moral example theory in your own words?

The Heart

It is natural to feel a deep gratitude for the love Jesus shows us on the cross. Over time, our understanding of Christ's love for us should transform how we look at the world. It might be helpful to think about the areas in our life where we naturally act selflessly, or the areas where we struggle to see people as Jesus sees them.

- What are your first impressions of the moral example theory? Do you buy into its explanation for Jesus' death? Why or why not?
- When you face criticism, injustice, or conflict, which part of Jesus' response in 1 Peter 2:21–23 is hardest to imitate?
- Philippians 2 tells believers to “consider others better than yourselves.” Where is that most difficult in your life right now (work, family, church, social media, etc.)?
- What specific songs, prayers, or worship practices reflect this theory of the cross?

The Hands

One reason the model Jesus provides is still relevant today is because it runs contrary to many ways of the world. Throughout his ministry, Jesus tells us that the kingdom he is bringing will turn our power structures upside down. If our actions become more aligned with Jesus, we will be blessed with love, peace, and forgiveness.

- What practices help us cultivate the humility described in Philippians 2?
- What is one act of selfless service you could do for someone else this week?
- [The Beatitudes](#) that Jesus taught in Matthew Chapter 5 demonstrate the power of selflessness and sacrifice. What is a concrete way you could embody one of the Beatitudes this week as you follow Christ's example?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, We thank you for this time of conversation and reflection. Through your life, you show us a different way to live—a way of humility, mercy, and self-giving love. As we leave this place, help us carry the example of Christ into our daily lives. Send us out to follow in Christ's steps, trusting that your Spirit is working through us to bring love and healing to the world. 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).

From Pastor Charity

[Easter Sunday](#) is just around the corner on April 5. This year we will have services at two locations: The Factory in Chesterfield, MO and Dogwood Social House in O'Fallon, IL.

Easter services are only possible with the help of amazing volunteers. We invite you to serve with us on the hospitality team or in kids ministry. Click on one of these links to sign-up:

[Volunteer at The Factory \(Chesterfield\)](#)

[Volunteer at Dogwood Social \(Illinois\)](#)