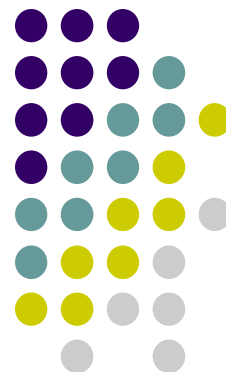


# discipleship of the cross

february 2012



**life together**  
**small group guide**  
first presbyterian church, spokane

# table of contents



introduction	3
february 5 atonement: a ransom for many	4
february 12 atonement: a great high priest	6
february 19 the example of the cross	8
february 26 deny yourself, take up your cross & follow me	10
appendix	
models of atonement	12
what pitfalls should people avoid when participating in a small group bible study?	13

# fpc calendar



<b>common hour: 10am sundays</b>	
february 12 all-together: a congregational meeting like no other	
february 19 – march 18	
2012 session b (5 weeks)	
presbyterians: looking back, looking forward	
the bible in context	
the parent connection	
love in the trenches	
connection point (march 4, 11, 18)	
march 25 all-together: grand opening of the lower level	
<b>thursday night live</b>	
february 9 – march 15	
surprised by hope, video series by n.t. wright	

# introduction



Dear Small Groups,

In our life together this month we are emphasizing our discipleship. We will read scriptures and discuss them as we seek to increase our understanding of the meaning of the cross and to follow Jesus there.

*Crux sola est nostra theologia.  
The Cross alone is our theology.*

- Martin Luther

The pattern of this series will be one where we focus on our theology and its application to our lives.

During the first two weeks we will look at the doctrine of atonement. Our goal is to answer questions like the following:

Why is the cross necessary?

What was happening in and through the death of Christ and how does that get applied to us?

Our hope is that we'll see the depth of our sin as such that only the willing sacrifice of Christ—the sinless one—is capable of restoring us to God.

In the second two weeks we'll lift up the cross as a model of what discipleship is for us and how we are, through Jesus, people of the cross.

Sometimes we fall into the trap of discipleship being a process of mimicking the actions of Jesus and we miss the depth of what we what it means to follow him. You are encouraged this month, rather, to internalize the theology of the cross and all that Jesus invites us to when he says, “deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me.”

Sincerely,

John Sowers, Senior Pastor

Jeremy Sanderson, Associate Pastor

Brenda Norton, Director of Community Life

## LifeTogether@Discipleship

We agree to seek to become like Jesus.

- We will read scripture; discuss it, reflect on it, and respond to it.
- We will seek and expect God to transform our lives and encourage that in one another.

### need more copies?

You can download this guide at [www.spokanefpc.org/CommunityLife/SmallGroups](http://www.spokanefpc.org/CommunityLife/SmallGroups) or pick up more copies for your group from the Small Group mailbox in the main office at the church.

**Scripture texts** provided in this guide are from the New Revised Standard Version available at <http://www.biblestudytools.com>



february 5

## atonement: a ransom for many mark 10:35-45

### Connecting Point

Option #1: Talk about how the previous month in the Psalms was for you as a group and individually.

Did you feel like you were more worshipful? more prayerful?

How did the Psalms help you be more open and honest with one another? with God?

In what ways could you see yourself or your group continuing to use psalm or similar practices of prayer and worship?

Option #2: Share ideas about what you do in the winter for restoration and enjoyment.

Have you read any good books this winter? . . . seen any good movies?

What are your favorite outdoor winter activities? Have you gotten to spend much time doing them?

Do you have any meals that you enjoy especially in the winter?

Do you tend to spend more or less time with other people in the winter?

### Opening Prayer

God, we ask you to transform our thinking through the reading and discussing of your word today. *Let the same mind be in [us] that was in Christ Jesus.*

### Understanding Atonement

Turn to the appendix on page 12 and read the 3 models of atonement. Discuss the questions at the bottom of the page.

(If you don't get through all the questions this week, consider revisiting this topic at another meeting this month.)

#### Models of Atonement

1. Christus Victor ("Christ the Victor")
2. Satisfaction/Substitution Theory
3. Moral Influence Theory

See the appendix on page 12 for explanation.

### Read the Word

Read Mark 10:35-45

<sup>35</sup> James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." <sup>36</sup> And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" <sup>37</sup> And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." <sup>38</sup> But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" <sup>39</sup> They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." <sup>41</sup> When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. <sup>42</sup> So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. <sup>43</sup> But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."



## Discuss the Word

Discussion Option #1:

- Which of the 3 models of atonement are indicated by these verses?
- What do you come to understand about the Christology of Jesus through these verses?

Discussion Option #2:

- What is a ransom?
- What is different about being freed by ransom rather than gaining freedom by escaping? . . . by earning it on your own?

Discussion Option #3:

- How do we allow true liberation to be the reality of our lives?
- How do we live fully into the freedom we have in Christ and at the same time follow his model of being a slave?
- How do you see Jesus living both as free and slave?

## Reflect and Respond

In what ways do you find a theological discussion helpful to your ability to apply God's Word in your life? What is most helpful in how your group goes about a theological discussion? What could be improved? Discuss how your group rates on the potential pitfalls presented in the article on page 13 of the appendix.

## Group Prayer

Spend some time in prayer as a group. Specifically, give thanks to God for the price paid by the death of Jesus on the cross.

How can the group pray for you personally during the upcoming week?  
(Make notes to remind you how to follow through with these prayers.)

## Next

Establish when and where you will meet next.

### Christology

The theological understanding of who Jesus is and what he has done.

Our understanding of Jesus as Christ and atonement are closely related.



february 12

## atonement: a great high priest hebrews 9:11-15

### Connecting Point

Option #1: Talk about how the previous month in the Psalms was for you as a group and individually.

Did you feel like you were more worshipful? more prayerful?

How did the Psalms help you be more open and honest with one another? with God?

In what ways could you see yourself or your group continuing to use psalm or similar practices of prayer and worship?

Option #2: Share ideas about what you do in the winter for restoration and enjoyment.

Have you read any good books this winter? . . . seen any good movies?

What are your favorite outdoor winter activities? Have you gotten to spend much time doing them?

Do you have any meals that you enjoy especially in the winter?

Do you tend to spend more or less time with other people in the winter?

### Opening Prayer

God, we ask you to transform our thinking through the reading and discussing of your word today. *Let the same mind be in [us] that was in Christ Jesus.*

### Understanding Atonement

Turn to the appendix on page 12 and read the 3 models of atonement. Discuss the questions at the bottom of the page.

(If you already did this last week you can choose to skip this step or spend time on the questions you didn't get to discuss yet.)

#### Models of Atonement

1. Christus Victor ("Christ the Victor")
2. Satisfaction/Substitution Theory
3. Moral Influence Theory

See the appendix on page 12 for explanation.

### Read the Word

Read Hebrews 9:11-15

You will probably find it helpful to read chapters 8 –10 of Hebrews for a broader development of the topics you'll be discussing below. You could do this reading together as a group or ask your group to read it ahead of your meeting time.

<sup>11</sup> But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), <sup>12</sup> he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, <sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God! <sup>15</sup> For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.



## Discuss the Word

Discussion Option #1:

- Which of the 3 models of atonement are indicated by these verses?
- What do you come to understand about the Christology of Jesus through these verses?

Discussion Option #2:

- What is the meaning of sanctification?
- Why does Jesus' atoning sacrifice bring us—once and for all—into relationship with God?

Discussion Option #3:

- What is your understanding of the difference between the first covenant and the new covenant?
- Discuss what it means to understand Jesus as high priest and mediator.

### Christology

The theological understanding of who Jesus is and what he has done.

Our understanding of Jesus as Christ and atonement are closely related.

## Reflect and Respond

In what ways do you find a theological discussion helpful to your ability to apply God's Word in your life? What is most helpful in how your group goes about a theological discussion? What could be improved? Discuss how your group rates on the potential pitfalls presented in the article on page 13 of the appendix.

## Group Prayer

Spend some time in prayer as a group. Specifically, give thanks to God for the price paid by the death of Jesus on the cross.

How can the group pray for you personally during the upcoming week? (Make notes to remind you how to follow through with these prayers.)

## Next

Establish when and where you will meet next.



february 19

## the example of the cross philippians 2:3-11

### Connecting Point

Do you have a piece of jewelry or artwork representing the cross? Describe it. How is it meaningful to you?

### Opening Prayer

God, we ask you to transform our thinking through the reading and discussing of your word today. *Let the same mind be in [us] that was in Christ Jesus.*

### Read the Word

Read Philippians 2:3-11

<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, <sup>8</sup> he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### Discuss the Word

Discussion Option #1:

- Where do you see similarities between these verses and Mark 10:35-45 (from week 1)?
- Give specific examples of what it looks like to live with this countercultural attitude?

Discussion Option #2:

- Discuss the meaning of humility and obedience.
- How are you motivated toward humility and obedience?
- How do you struggle with the concepts of humility and obedience?

Discussion Option #3:

- What would it mean for you to do everything for the sake of others?
- How would caring for yourself fit into this?



---

## Reflect and Respond

Reread Philippians 2:3-11 one or two times.

Ask everyone to listen for one phrase that they are feeling challenged to live.

Share your phrases with one another.

(Make notes below.)

## Group Prayer

Pray for one another based on what was shared during the Reflect and Respond time.

(Make notes to use as you pray for group members this week.)

## Next

Establish when and where you will meet next.



february 26

## deny yourself, take up your cross & follow me matthew 16:24-26

### Connecting Point

Imagine Jesus asking you the question he asks his disciples in Matthew 16: "Who do people say that I am?" If by people he means non-Christian co-workers and friends, how would you answer?

### Opening Prayer

God, we ask you to transform our thinking through the reading and discussing of your word today. *Let the same mind be in [us] that was in Christ Jesus.*

### Read & Discuss the Word

Read Matthew 16:13-23 to set the context for the scripture this week.

<sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup> And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup> He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." <sup>20</sup> Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. <sup>21</sup> From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. <sup>22</sup> And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." <sup>23</sup> But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Read Matthew 16:24-26

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"



## Discuss the Word

Discussion Option #1:

- Why do you think Jesus makes the statement in verses 24-26 in the context of verses 13-23?
- In what ways do you find the message of verses 24-26 important in the context of our current culture?

Discussion Option #2:

- Discuss the meaning of each of the three instructions:
  - deny yourself
  - take up your cross
  - follow me

Discussion Option #3:

- How does Jesus' instructions in verses 24-26 inform your attitude? What is helpful? What is challenging?
- How might you prioritize your life based on verses 24-26? What should you forfeit? What will you gain?

## Reflect and Respond

Allow time for everyone to reflect on how they are being challenged to internalize Jesus' instructions to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him.  
Share your thoughts with one another.

## Group Prayer

Pray for one another in regards to what you shared in the Reflect and Respond time.

Have someone in your group read the Charge & Benediction in the box to the right as a closing to your prayer time.

## Next

Establish when and where you will meet next.

### Charge & Benediction

“Why do you then fear to carry the cross. This is the way that leads to the kingdom.

In the cross we have salvation; in the cross we have life; in the cross we have protection from our enemies.

In the cross there is the inpouring of heavenly sweetness; in the cross there is strengthening of minds; in the cross there is spiritual joy.

In the cross is the height of virtue; in the cross is the fullness of holiness.

In the cross alone do we find the soul's eternal salvation and hope of everlasting life.

*Take up your cross, therefore, and follow Jesus and you will pass into unending life.”*

- Thomas a Kempis, The Imitation of Christ



# appendix

## models of atonement

Our understanding of atonement has been shaped by a variety of viewpoints. Here are 3 key views.

### 1. Christus Victor (“Christ the Victor”)

*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.*

Colossians 2:15

Atonement as a dramatic struggle between God and the forces of evil in the world.

The deity of Christ is deeply hidden in human form. The evil forces are thus fooled into thinking he is easy prey. Under the veil of his humanity, Christ triumphs over evil and death. By his cross and resurrection, Christ decisively defeats these powers and thus frees their captives.

Historical proponent: Gregory of Nyssa

### 2. Satisfaction/Substitution Theory

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”*

Galatians 3:13

Atonement as vicarious suffering: The satisfaction that is due to God as a result of human sin is infinite.

While humanity *must* provide this satisfaction, only God *can* provide it. For this reason God has become human in Christ. In his perfect obedience to the cross, satisfaction is rendered, justice is done, sinners are forgiven.

Historical proponent: St. Anselm

### 3. Moral Influence Theory

*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus*

Philippians 2:5

Atonement as the response of humanity to the profound example of Christ’s suffering and obedience.

“Christ shows God’s love to us in such a way that we are constrained to respond in wonder and gratitude.”

Historical proponent: Abelard

### Questions:

- In what way does our view of atonement relate to our understanding of the nature and person of Christ?
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in each theory of atonement. What are the implications of each?
- Why might scripture suggest all three of these models as true? Can they be harmonized?
- Why do you think our culture has a difficult time understanding and accepting the concept of atonement?



## What pitfalls should people avoid when participating in a small-group Bible study?

by Sam O'Neal

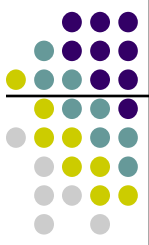
I firmly believe that small groups can be a positive force for discipleship, spiritual growth, and advancing the Kingdom of God through acts of service and love. But, like any human endeavor, that potential for good is balanced by the potential to cause damage.

To help you avoid that damage, here are several pitfalls to be aware of as you participate in small-group Bible studies:

- **Focusing on education rather than transformation.** Too many small-group members believe that "doing Bible study" is primarily an intellectual experience. That's not the case, though—or it shouldn't be the case. Acquiring new information is good, especially when that information has to do with God and his Word, but the experience of learning something new in a small group should be the first step on a long journey toward transformation. And the second step on that journey should be application. Remember James 1:22: "Do not merely listen to the Word and so deceive yourselves; do what it says."
- **Confusing opinion with fact.** We all have opinions about what the Bible says and what it means to live as a Christian. Most of us have strong opinions, at that. And it's natural for us to bring those opinions into a small group—that's a good thing. But trouble can arise when we start treating our opinions as established, "no one should disagree with this" fact. So if you feel yourself beginning to clash with what another person believes or how another person behaves, take a step back before escalating that clash. Ask yourself, "Am I reacting to an incontrovertible Truth from the Bible (of which there are surprisingly few), or am I reacting to a personal opinion?" It's vital that small-group members allow one another the freedom to learn and grow as individuals, rather than attempting to squeeze everyone into the same mold.
- **Giving in to fear.** Most people have an instinctual aversion to sharing the deeper parts of their stories—especially the parts that convey weakness, struggle, or shame. So it's no surprise that interaction and discussion between group members during the first several months of a group's journey usually remain on the surface. But if the goal of participating in a small group is spiritual growth and transformation, then people will eventually need to go deeper. It's a scary thing to talk openly about parts of yourself that you don't like. It's also scary to admit when you don't know or understand something, and to ask questions that reveal what you don't know. For many, the most frightening thing of all is the act of confessing sin. But all of these actions are important and necessary steps to growth.
- **Avoiding commitment.** People are busy. That's a fact of modern life and something that can't be ignored when it comes to establishing a community of believers. But that doesn't mean small-group members can treat the group as an optional experience from week to week—not if their goal in joining the group is spiritual growth and transformation.

Small groups work when group members establish a higher level of authenticity, trust, and accountability than they experience in other spheres of life (work, neighbors, and so on). And the first step in establishing that authenticity, trust, and accountability is regular, dependable attendance. If group members skip out on group meetings regularly (more than once or twice in a semester), they dramatically limit the amount of good that can be accomplished in that group. More than that, group members who do not participate fully during the group meetings, or who keep things at the surface (see above), risk turning the group into a collection of acquaintances rather than a living, breathing community.

<http://www.smallgroups.com/discussion/questionanswer/samoneal/q6.html>

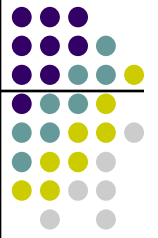


# notes

---

# notes

---



Produced by Brenda Norton, Director of Community Life  
at First Presbyterian Church, Spokane  
318 S. Cedar, Spokane WA 99201