



Pilot Programme

Welcome, Instructions and Session 1

For Course Participants

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Key verse: Matthew 28:16-20

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Welcome to the "All for Jesus, Jesus for all" course. Our mission as Christians hasn't changed; some two thousand years ago Jesus commanded his followers to go and make disciples of all nations. However, when we talk about mission and being missional disciples, for many of us it can sometimes feel more like "Mission Impossible". Take heart! Jesus also said, "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth..." Being a missional disciple is a special partnership with the Holy Spirit, who goes ahead of us and prepares the way.

So why another course on discipleship when there are already so many out there? The answer is simple, this resource is not just another discipleship course. To start with it is essentially Congregational in its ethos, mainly for Congregational Federation churches and funded by the Council for World Mission (CWM). Furthermore, we have chosen not to use the word disciple in the title or in the writing of this course for the following reasons. Firstly, the word "disciple" has changed over the years and no longer means



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what it did in its original context i.e. apprentice or learner. Rather it has come to simply mean someone who believes in Jesus but does not necessarily walk with Jesus in a way that makes disciples as expressed in Matthew 28 above. Secondly, the word disciple has come to mean someone who would say they are a Christian, however, similarly, a Christian does not necessarily follow Jesus in an active and transformative way.

It is interesting to note that in the last census (2021), 46,2% of the population of England and Wales identified as Christian, however, we also know from studies done that only 4.7% of people in England and Wales attend any type of church group on a regular basis. Of those attending church, how many are committed to the mission to go and make disciples? We don't know and perhaps we don't need to know. This is not to judge those who for whatever reason have chosen to interpret their Christian action in response to Matthew 28, quoted above, differently. Without wanting to complicate things, our vision for the course is simply for it to reignite your passion and commitment to follow Jesus, to learn from him, to listen to the Holy Spirit and to take steps towards doing something new towards the mission of making disciples. So, without further ado, welcome to All for Jesus, Jesus for All.



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INTRODUCTION

All for Jesus, Jesus for All is an exciting new resource that we hope will inspire Congregational churches to **go deeper** with God, encouraging them to **step out** in faith and resourcing churches as they **respond** to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We pray that as your church engages with this new resource, you will be strengthened and encouraged in your walk and witness as you follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

All for Jesus, Jesus for All aims to be a modern, relevant, contextual and interactive course. The focus of the course is on what it means to be committed to Jesus and his message of love. The course is primarily aimed at churches within the Congregational way of being church. This means that, apart from other scriptures there will also be an emphasis on the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9) in which all are called to minister and serve in love, reflecting this mission through prayer and action. To love, pray for and serve others however and wherever we can.

To this end, the course offers a practical way to step out into our communities with courage and faith. As part of the course there are podcasts in which various Congregational Federation members tell their stories. We have included an active listening workshop and webinar which aims to enable course participants to take steps towards listening to their communities and to see where God is already at work. Furthermore, we are aiming to produce a resource pack for those churches that are called into Holy Spirit led action to either help meet the needs in local communities or to support and partner with others already working to meet those needs.



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All for Jesus, Jesus for All is more than a Bible study resource. It could even be used as a preaching resource or for personal devotions. However, the greatest benefit would be to use the course in a group. The main aim is for the course to enable a greater depth of relationship with Jesus through hearing personal stories, learning together, looking at relevant biblical passages, reflecting, discussing, and praying together. There is throughout the resource an emphasis on listening to the Spirit of God to hear what the Lord is saying to the churches. So, you'll be pleased to know that there is a session on prayer which covers how we can hear God speak.

For this reason, it is important that study groups undertaking the course, create a space where it feels safe to explore various aspects of scripture and discussion topics, in order to deepen our faith. This means having an attitude of respect and acceptance without judgement when others share their stories and thoughts confidentially. Maybe you would like to make your own group agreement together before you begin the course. The agreement could include things like start and finish times, confidentiality, how you would like to be treated etc. See below for further information and example group agreement.

In summary, *All for Jesus, Jesus for All* proposes an ethos of inclusivity and diversity. We want it to enable you, the course participants, to meet each other where you are at and to consider context. Our intention is to enable flexibility in how the course can be used in a variety of settings (e.g. youth groups, Bible/fellowship groups, personal devotions or Sunday worship). We hope that you will find its flexibility useful for what you have in mind for your church's spiritual nurture and growth.



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STRUCTURE OF COURSE SESSIONS:

- A. **Welcome** (on arrival) – May include a time of fellowship and refreshments.
- B. **Introduction, Key Verse, Opening Prayer and Hymn** – These are read, or your group facilitator may ask a group participant to read it, and you may sing the hymn suggested or another.
- C. **Icebreaker** – This enables you to connect well within the context of this course and relax together, even if you already know each other.
- D. **Group Agreement** – This is optional; however, it is recommended if the participants don't know each other well or to pre-empt and create a safe space for challenging discussions. There is an example group agreement below that you can adopt as a group. We also recommend that you revisit the agreement each time you meet.

Going Deeper Challenge Feedback: As part of this time, you might also want to feedback on the previous week's learning or feedback on any Going Deeper activity anyone may have undertaken as suggested in the previous week's session. This is not applicable to the first session.

- E. **Listen to the Podcast and Read the Teaching Section** – It is usually helpful to make a note of anything that has stood out for you as you've listened. Then share what you feel able to during the discussion time later.
- F. **Time of Quiet Reflection** – This is time to reflect quietly to yourselves on what was said in the teaching and the podcast, and to make some personal notes in the spaces provided of what impacted you, before discussing the session topic.



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- G. **Discuss the podcast and teaching section** – There are some specific questions in each section that you might want to consider or below are a few generic questions to help you to reflect:
- What was your first reaction as you listened?
 - Imagine you were able to time-travel, and you were there in the Bible story. How do you think you might have responded?
 - You travel back to the present day, and you can't wait to tell your friends and family. How would you go about that?
- H. **Conclude and close in Prayer** – Feel free to pray your own prayers, the prayer provided as part of the session ending or use the *All for Jesus Prayer* at the end of this document.
- I. **Going Deeper Challenge** - To challenge yourselves a bit more, think about what you've discovered in this session and who you might share it with. If this feels daunting, start with a trusted friend or family member. Then at the next session share with your group how that went. Alternatively, each section offers a Going Deeper Challenge that you might want to consider acting on.



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EXAMPLE GROUP AGREEMENT

1. We will commit to praying for one another during the course.
2. Anything that is shared in the group of a personal nature will not be shared outside of the group. If what is shared is a safeguarding issue, then it will be shared with the appropriate safeguarding officer.
3. All are free to express their opinions in an appropriate manner.
4. We will not deny another their view or perspective on any matter including faith.
5. We will listen to each other in a way that is affirming so that the person speaking knows they have been heard.
6. We will aim to begin at the advertised time and agree the end time together.

Session 1 – The Divine Community (Author: Elisabeth)

A. Introduction:

In "Session 1 – The Divine Community," we embark on a journey to explore the nature of Jesus Christ and the foundational beliefs of the Christian faith. Through examining biblical teachings and reflecting on the key verse, John 3:16, we delve into the concept of the Trinity—the divine community of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and what it means for humanity. This session focuses on understanding the person of Jesus, His mission to bring God's love to the world, and the significance of concepts such as grace, sin, redemption, and salvation in light of God's plan to reconcile all of creation to Himself. Through scripture, discussion, and prayer, participants are invited to reflect on the transformative power of divine love in their lives.

- B. Key Verse:** John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal Life.”



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Opening Prayer

Gracious God,

You have searched us and known us even before we knew you and it is your great Love that draws us to You.

We all have different experiences that have led us to this place of exploration of fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith.

We pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we listen and as we talk openly maybe about subjects we have not shared with others before.

We ask that our understanding of You as our Creator be deepened through this time together in Your Word.

We pray for wisdom, clarity and sensitivity and that we will all feel we have learned something that will encourage us to share our faith more confidently.

Your Holy Word says that those “who seek will find and to those who knock the door will be opened.” (Matthew 7:8)

So, we pray that as we seek and as we knock that our minds and hearts will be opened to receive revelation about who Jesus was and who He wants to be in our lives today. Amen.

Hymn: Amazing Grace

C. Suggested Icebreaker – Your course facilitator will organise this



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D. Optional Group agreement – See example above.

Notes

E. Teaching Session:

N.B. This is the most intensive session of the course as it contains exploration of the fundamentals of the Christian Faith. You may find that you revisit this teaching again.

Podcast: Listen here to Ruth’s testimony (4.09 minutes). You will find this on the Congregational Federation’s website under “Our Work”.

Below is a written Summary of Ruth’s testimony (in case of difficulties in accessing the podcast):

Discovering Jesus

Clemy Gilmore curiously asks Ruth about her journey to discovering Jesus. Ruth recalls her lifelong love for books—her refuge through both joy and hardship. After a devastating accident left her with nothing, she sought answers in the occult, hoping to make sense of her struggles. One day, she stumbled upon a book titled The Invisible Hand by Victor Dunstan, which contained biblical prophecies. The uncanny accuracy of these predictions stirred something deep within her, compelling her to explore the Bible for herself. Page by page, she devoured its words, realizing with certainty that it was divinely inspired. The more she read, the more she believed—especially in the prophecies about Jesus. That revelation changed everything, leading her to embrace His teachings and commit her life to Him.



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Who was Jesus?

Key Bible verses: Matt.3:16-17, John 14:26, John 10:30, John 17:5, John 1:1-3,

The Christian Faith is based upon its Founder Jesus Christ (a historical figure born before King Herod died in 4BC) The Bible records extraordinary claims by his first followers about His Resurrection from the dead which certainly elevates Jesus to more than an ordinary historical figure (In addition to the Gospels also see Josephus' paragraph on this in Antiquities of the Jews, Book 18, Chap. 3).

The traditional doctrines of the Church acknowledge a Triune God. A Divine Community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although the Nicene Creed is not generally used by Reformists it represents the traditional view of Jesus as Fully God and Fully Human.

(See a copy of the Nicene Creed on page.... Or view here:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nicene-Creed>)

Although the word Trinity is not found in the Bible the relational aspect it involves conveys the flow of Divine Love and both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit feature in the Jesus story.

At the start of His public ministry, the Spirit of God alights like a dove upon Jesus at His Baptism and the Father calls out "This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt.3:16-17).

In His Farewell Address Jesus says "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my Name He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. "(John 14:26)

Jesus certainly makes references to being One with God His Father alluding to His Divinity:

"I and the Father are One." (John 10:30)



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“And now Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” (John 17:5)

“In the Beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” (John 1:1-3)

John’s gospel records the 7 “I AM” sayings of Jesus:

I AM The Bread of Life (John 6:35) meets hunger in each person for love, acceptance, value and purpose

I AM The Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14) who gives his life for his sheep

I AM the Door (John 10:7, 9), Entrance to all that you need to know of God

I AM The True Vine, (John 15:1-8) Keep attached to me for all you need for abundant life

I AM the Way the Truth and the Life, (John 14:6) Follow me because I have the answers

I AM the Light of the World, (John 8:12 and John 12:44-50) Jesus changes Darkness into light

I AM the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25) New life out of diseased lives now and hope of eternal life

It was to the woman at the well in Samaria that Jesus made another admission about Himself. (John 4:25-26)

Samaritan Woman :

“When the Messiah comes (who is called Christ) he will proclaim all things to us. “

Jesus said “I am He”

We cannot talk about the Christian Faith without hearing words such as Sin, Redemption and Salvation. So, let’s explore these next.



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Sin — Denial of our self-relatedness to God's life speaks of our need of a Saviour

The Laws of Moses are understood traditionally to have been given by Yahweh/God to protect God's people from self-harm to help steer their lives individually and in community and in harmony with nature.

Jesus summed up all the law in the Two Greatest Commandments; To Love God and to Love your Neighbour as Yourself. (Matt. 22:34-40)

A definition of Love is to 'Will the Good of the Other.'

If we do not love God, or love ourselves and don't show love to others, the New Testament says that this is sin for "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4)

Jesus says that evil comes out of the human heart. (Matt 15:16-20)

Biblically sin begins when Adam chooses to determine what is good and what is evil himself by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden, rather than trusting God's wisdom. Because of this disobedience sin enters the world in causing a rupture in the relationship between humanity and a Holy God. Before this Adam walked unashamed in his nakedness (and vulnerability) in the cool of the evening in friendly conversation with his Creator (Gen 3:7-13).

God: Where are you Adam?

Adam: I hid because I was naked.

God: Who told you that you were naked?

Humankind felt guilt for the first time because sin has a habit of awakening in us, just by its nature, a sense of shame and self-consciousness in the presence of God.

Self-reproach and alienation from God led to the blame-game and Adam points the finger at Eve who pushes the blame onto the serpent. Adam's poor choice therefore had consequences for inter-personal relationships and humankind's relationship with the natural world. Abuse rather than harmony is the outcome.



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“Sin is basically the refusal to live in right relationship with God and others; the denial of God’s grace and the refusal to live in just and peaceful community that participates in and reflects God’s own life in communion.” (Faith Seeking Understanding, Daniel Migliore, Pg. 157).

Redemption - The How of Salvation

Sin has infected the world alienating the human race from God and bad choices have caused damage in our relationships with each other and with Nature but God wants us back in the Divine circle of Love and has gone to extraordinary lengths to achieve this.

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem these who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (Gal.:4-7)

The Good News is that Jesus, in the Incarnation, came from outside the disfunction of humanity’s selfishness and entered into the disfunction to do something about the self-directed focus of humankind’s affections. The Divine became human so that humanity could be re-connected with Divine Love through Jesus.

And in Jesus’ own words

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“Then he took a cup and after giving thanks he gave it to them saying “Drink from it all of you for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthews 26:27-28)

The Mercy of God in the New Covenant seems to be invoked upon our confession to God of our sins rather than by making of sacrifices as payment to God by the sinner (Old Covenant).

“If we confess our sins He is just and faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9).

On the road to Emmaus the Risen Christ explains that his death was part of God’s plan:



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“Thus, it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations.” (Luke 24:45-47)

Theologians down the centuries have attempted to understand how the death of Jesus brought about Salvation and this has given rise to different Atonement theories.

Jesus said “Therefore my Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No-one takes it from me I lay it down that I may take it up again.” (John 10:17)

(See Key Resources on Redemption)

Salvation - The effect of Redemption

The word salvation comes from the verb “to salvage”. To rescue something from going to waste and which is restored to its former glory.

- *For the Individual*

Jesus, whose name means Saviour, said :

“The thief comes only to kill and to destroy but I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

Salvation restores fellowship between the Creator and the believer because Christ became the new Adam in His incarnation so that we can be resurrected in Christ as children of God, sharing in the circle of Divine Love through grace.

- *For Community Life*

The Gospels often show Jesus restoring someone into their community who had become alienated from society through sickness or through an infringement of the law of Moses.

- *For Nature*

..the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Romans 8:21)



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Salvation Is multi-aspect; it is for the individual's relationship with God, for community living and for renewal of the natural world.

Conclusion

The Gospel is often referred to as the mystery of salvation because it is not easy to understand with our finite minds what the Infinite Mind of God has done .

Jesus knew that His Resurrection was challenging to grasp and knew it would continue to be so down the ages so His words to Thomas are reassuring for us:

“Blessed are you Thomas because you have seen and believed but more blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed.” (John 20:29)

Faith in Jesus extra-ordinary life and openness to the Spirit of God is how we connect with God for Jesus said:

“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent” (John 6:29)

Sin, redemption and salvation impact upon humankind deeply and we need the Spirit of God to act as Teacher in revealing to us all that Jesus had taught his first followers whose testimony grew into a world religion – a faith with Divine Love at its heart.



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F. Quiet Reflection Time

What is God saying to me in this session?

Notes

G. Discuss the following:

Explore one or more of the options below

1. What is your favourite “I AM” saying of Jesus and why?
2. Was there anything surprising related to the teachings on the Trinity?
3. In the Lord’s prayer we ask God to forgive us our sins - what does this mean to you?
4. What for you is the significance of the Communion service?
5. Share a testimony of God’s redemption in your life, in community or in the natural world.
6. In what way can we continue Jesus’ work of restoring people and nature to God?

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I. Going Deeper Challenge

Some ideasyou may have your own on how to take the learning forward

1. Maybe you could think about how, if you were asked, you would sum up what you believe about why Jesus came and what his death achieved?
2. Maybe ask another Christian what they understand of sin, redemption and salvation
3. Read a biography (or testimony over internet) of a person whose life has been transformed by belief in Christ
4. Attend another type of church tradition and during the service see if you can identify what beliefs are expressed about who Jesus is and why He came (eg, contained in the lyrics of hymns, Bible texts used, or theme of sermon preached).
5. Identify from the Bible words of Jesus that express his mission
6. Create a visual representation of The Divine Community (Trinity); Created world in harmony



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Key Resources For Session 1 (This will ultimately be in a Resources section of the course)

The Bible – Both Old and New Testaments

Isaiah chapter 53

Isaiah 61:1-3 (Luke 4:14-21)

Hebrews 1:1-10

Hebrews 4 :14 and including chapter 5

Hebrews 10:11-22

Romans 8:1-11

John's Gospel chapter 1 In the beginning was the WORD

Colossians 1:9-23'

1 Corinthians 14:1-6

[The Full Text of the Nicene Creed - Bibles.net](https://www.bibles.net) AD or CE 32

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/history-theories-atonement>

www.sgmlifewords.com for accessible booklet of Jesus Life Story through Scriptures

<https://bibleproject.com/articles/why-did-jesus-have-to-die-a-question-worth-unpacking/>

Jesus – The Game changer How the life and teaching of Jesus changed the world and why it matters with Karl FAASE (Amazon Prime)



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Jesus the Game changer 2 ; To the Ends of the Earth (Amazon Prime and available on DVD)

Some Key works

Anderson, W. (Editor), Diesslin R. (illustrator), A Journey through Christian Theology with texts from the first to the twenty-first century (2010)

Aulen, Gustaf,. Christus Victor: An historical study of the three main types of Atonement (1931)

Baxter-Kruger, C. Jesus and the Undoing of Adam Paperback (2007)

Campbell, R. The New Theology (1907)

Craig, William Lane, The Atonement (2018)

Dale, R. W. The Atonement, by a Congregational Minister, Carrs Lane (1895)

Ford, D.F. (ed.) The Modern Theologians: an introduction to Christian Theology in the twentieth century, 3rd edition.(2005)

Forsyth, P.T. The Work of Christ (by a Congregational Minister, Clarendon Park (1910)

Holmes, Stephen R. *The Holy Trinity: Understanding God's Life. Christian Doctrines in Historical Perspective.* (2012).

[https://www.academia.edu/4091830/Stephen_R_Holmes_The_Holy_Trinity_Understanding_God_s_Life]

Johnson, Adam, Gundry, Stanley (Editors) *Five Views on The Extent of the Atonement*,(2019)



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Kantzer, Kenneth "The Christology of Karl Barth," Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society 1.2 (Spring 1958): 25-28. ([Microsoft Word - christology-barth_kantzer.doc](#))

Packer, J. I. What did the Cross Achieve? (2023).

Peacore, L. A. The Role of Women's Experience in Feminist Theologies of Atonement (2010)

Pugh, Ben Pictures of Atonement – A New Testament Study (2020)

Ruether, R. R. Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism. (1998)

Sonderregger, Kathrine, Systematic Theology: The Doctrine of God Vol 1 (www.google scholar.com)

Weaver, Denny, The Non-Violent Atonement (2001)

Wright, Tom ,Simply Jesus, Who he was, What he did Why it matters (pp 163-201)(2011)

Young, J. Teach Yourself Christianity. London, Hodder Arnold.(2010)

Young, F. The Making of the Creeds (2002)



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OPTIONAL TOOL KIT For Session 1 – Going deeper still

REDEMPTION AND SALVATION

What place has the Cross as the means of atoning for the sins of the world and bringing salvation

Theories of atonement fall into five main types :

1. Christus Victor

a) The ransom-to-Satan theory

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all...(1 Tim 2:5-6)

For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)

This theory believes that because of Adam's original sin the rest of the human race is bound to Satan because Adam chose to believe the serpent rather than God and this has left the human condition unable to free ourselves of the default position of making choices that are not healthy for ourselves, the long-term consequence of which is death. By taking upon Himself the sins of the flesh by becoming human and facing off death Jesus frees those who believe in his sacrifice from the clutches of death. The devil thought he had secured the upper hand over God when Jesus died which was the deal, God's Son in exchange for the lives of many. But the resurrection was the victory of Christ over the power of the enemy so humankind goes free and the devil ends up with nothing.

b) Satisfaction Theory

This theory was set out by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1099 in his book *Cur Deus Homo* (Why the God-Man?). This theory goes that humankind was made in the image of God but because of Adam's disobedience and the choices



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people still make today to put themselves before God then God's honour has been affronted. God's Name is holy and marred humanity is because of sin not able to satisfy God's honour. Therefore, God became Man in Jesus to live in perfection and to offer that as a perfect sacrifice which would satisfy God's own divine justice. This offering of the God-Man merits a reward which is the grace poured out upon humanity in forgiveness.

Hebrews 10:12,

But this man after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.

Hebrews 10:14

For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

In this model, God is fully himself, both in his justice and in his mercy, fully expressing both attributes at the cross, resulting in an all-sufficient solution to the human predicament.

2. Penal substitution ('Penal' comes from Penalty)

The idea of paying a penalty implies that God needed to punish sinners, and that something actually happened to Jesus on the cross which was accepted by the Father equivalent to this need for justice in a legal sense.

Substitution by Jesus, meant Jesus absorbed the judgement of sin which is death, which should have been ours, thus sparing those who believe in this sacrifice, the pain of the wrath and judgement of God.

Isaiah 53's suffering servant can be interpreted in this way.

He was wounded for our transgressions he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him.



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Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (thus it is written, “cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”(Gal.3:13)

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for use, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor.5:21)

This substitutionary penal atonement was offered voluntarily by the Son of God to His Father.

‘I am the good shepherd,, the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep’....Therefore My Father loves Me because I lay down My life that I may take it up again. No-one takes it from Me but I lay it down of Myself. (John 10:11, 17)

3. Moral influence

This theory suggests the fact Jesus was prepared to go to his death, despite having lived only to serve others, which challenges us to give our lives in the service of others. Thus, Christ’s death impresses on us a great example of God’s selfless Love. He is crucified as a martyr due to the radical nature of His moral example which highlighted others’ short-comings caused them to try to extinguish the light of Jesu’ exemplary life.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

and

... He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. (2 Cor.5:15)



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4. Non-violent atonement

This theory is the most recent and has been influenced by Feminist and Liberation Theologies. It wants to put a full stop to the notion that a violent death can in any way help towards creating a non-violent world. The theory hopes to offer the hope that there is an alternative way to salvation and that Jesus' death was simply a result of the violent culture and crucifixion was the politically expedient way of putting water on the flames of jealousy and potential civil unrest.

We are not saved by a sacrifice but we are saved **from** sacrificing. We are saved from the very idea that the answer to bad violence is good violence, which we see never-endingly played out on a global scale every day..

In the Gospels, we see Jesus fully absorbing all the community violence associated with blaming others or scapegoating. In non-violent atonement theories, God is not violent. He is on the side of the victims of scapegoating. Christ's perfect life and care for the people he met along the way was vindicated by his resurrection, thus fully exposing our scapegoating tendencies for what they really are - Sin.



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5. Incarnation Theory

This theory holds that Jesus was always going to become incarnate to bring humanity into the circle of Divine Love. The Fall was problematic but not insurmountable. The catastrophe of Adam made the road of incarnation and thus our adoption into the circle of Divine Love one of pain and suffering and death but it did not create its necessity. The life of the eternal Son of God perfectly expressed in the historical Jesus (he did not sin or succumb to any temptations) – the ideal humanity restored as Jesus calls a halt to the self-destruction of humankind.

Salvation is Heaven waiting to break through into the human heart not bringing humankind into the Kingdom of Heaven. We still have to suffer as we shed the husk of our selfishness as we become like the second Adam, Jesus in his perfect unselfishness. Taking on the righteousness of Christ is being restored into the circle of right relationships within the Divinity. Jesus came because God refused to give up on the human race and humility is the mark of the Divine so Incarnation was not a barrier to God.



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ALL FOR JESUS PRAYER BASED ON PSALM 119:18 – SUSANNE NOCKELS

Jesus, you said “go and make disciples”,

Not members of a cult, not groupies, not ‘yes’ men and women- disciples.

Lord, you offered Simon and Andrew more than the mundane,

You healed Mary Magdalene’s troubled soul,

You gave Matthew a way out of collaborating with an oppressive power,

You challenged Nathaniel’s lazy prejudices.

You defied cultural expectations and let Mary, the sister of Martha, sit at your feet.

Jesus, You taught Your disciples, gave them examples of humility and love, walked with them, ate with them and prayed for them.

You lived Your life, Your death and Your resurrection before their eyes.

Jesus, we are both disciples and disciple-makers.

Let us never separate those roles.

You have captured our imaginations,

You have healed our inner wounds,

You have released us from greed and the narrowness of our own opinions,

You have invited us into Your presences forever and our greatest desire is to follow You.

We leave what has been and step into the unknown with You.

You love us as we are, with our unique abilities and personalities, and You love into becoming more our true selves.

Like Your first disciples we will make mistakes and get our priorities wrong.

We will never stop learning or graduate from being disciples,



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And yet, Your promise is that we will see wonders and resurrection life in our own day.

We pray that as we follow You more closely, we become disciple-making disciples,

Help us offer more than the mundane,

Help us speak in ways that heal,

Help us show people a way out when people hate the life they are living,

Help us share a truth that startles and attracts,

And make space for all who want to sit at the Master's feet.

We will listen and counsel and be examples of integrity, humility and love.

We will walk with people, offer hospitality and accept hospitality and above all we will pray for others.

Jesus, let people see our little deaths to sin, the ways we suffer and our hope of resurrection.

We will be that vulnerable in Your name.

We do not seek our own glory but Yours.

Because You became inglorious out of love for us.

You became that vulnerable.

We praise You as Your disciples and disciple-makers.

Amen.