

crossology

This study for the *Crossology* sermon series looks at the anatomy of the cross and helps us rediscover the wonder behind the most famous symbol in the world.

Each week we will look at a different aspect of Jesus' work on the cross:

- Propitiation
- Redemption
- Reconciliation
- Expiation
- Victory

Week 1: Propitiation

1. Connect

- The cross is everywhere. It can be meaningful, decorative, political, powerful — and sometimes even offensive. You see it as jewellery, at places like the Hill of Crosses in Lithuania, or even formed from twisted steel in the rubble of disasters (like Ground Zero after 9/11).

When you see a cross in public, or worn as a fashion item, what's the first thing that comes to mind?

- There are generally three ways people struggle with the concept of God's wrath towards sin: **Performers** try to earn favor through behavior; the **Prideful** feel they haven't done anything wrong; and **Play-downers** trivialize the seriousness of their sin. **Which of these three tendencies do you find most present in your own heart?**

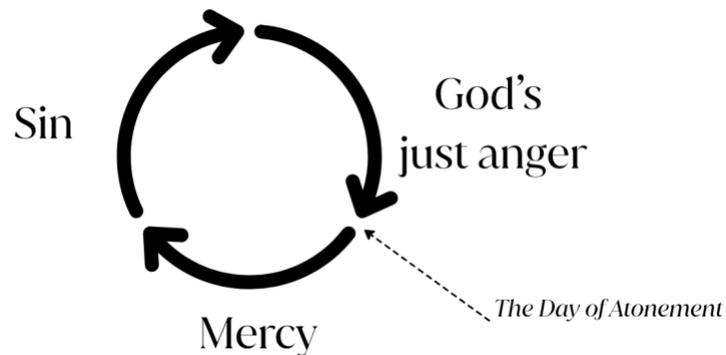
2. Character

*Ask someone to read **Romans 3:21–26** and **Romans 5:9–10** aloud. Then, ask the following questions:*

1. **What words, images, or phrases stand out to you in these passages regarding God's holiness and justice?**
2. God is defined by His **holiness**, a "transcendent otherness" that is the most important aspect of His character. How does this perspective inform your understanding of why God cannot simply "sweep crimes under the rug"?
3. Propitiation (*hilasterion*) refers to the "**Mercy Seat**," the site where God's wrath is turned away and mercy is extended. **How do these verses show that God's perfect justice and His abounding love combine at the cross?**
4. Even though humanity has rebelled, God is described as "slow to anger." He isn't impulsive or harsh. How does the cross show us a Father who takes the initiative to rescue His people rather than waiting for them to fix things themselves?

3. Consider

1. Sin isn't small because God isn't small. Every sin is ultimately against an infinitely worthy Creator. The Bible presents sin as something like "cosmic treason" — a rejection of God's rule that damages both His glory and our joy. **How does this challenge the way we often "play down" our daily mistakes?**
2. In the Old Testament, the High Priest sprinkled blood on the *kapporet* (Mercy Seat) to avert wrath for one year, but this created a cycle of sin and sacrifice that never truly ended and was only for Israel. **How does Jesus serving as the "ultimate sacrifice" for all nations finally break this cycle?**



3. Jesus did not just turn God's wrath away from us; He **absorbed it Himself** so that we could be reconciled. **For the "Performers" in the group, how does this truth free you from the fear that you are currently "in the negative" with God?**
4. Imagine two train tracks: one heading for death and one leading to eternal life. **If faith in Jesus is the only thing that moves us from one track to the other, what does it mean to "receive by faith" instead of by effort?**

4. Cover

- The reality of God's wrath still rests on those who have not yet accepted this grace. **Spend time praying specifically for one neighbor or friend**, asking for an opportunity to share the "wonder-working power" of the cross with them.
- **Pray a prayer of surrender**, asking for the grace to stop "performing" and instead lean entirely on the "precious blood of the Lamb" that has turned a tree of execution into a "Holy of Holies" for us.