



Week 2

Christ as Our Substitute

READ

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15



What is a substitute? When I was growing up sometimes we would have a substitute teacher in school. That meant that someone who was not our teacher would stand in the role and responsibility that our regular teacher would have. If you go to a restaurant and ask for a substitute for a part of your meal, that is an item that will replace or stand in for an item that you would normally have.

In the Old Testament, God would come to meet with the people of Israel but there was a problem. The people of Israel were sinful and rebellious. They continued to live in ways that were not in line with who God had called them to be. They continued to, in essence, substitute God for themselves, functionally declaring by their actions that they were God and they should be the ones who dictated right from wrong. However, God deeply loved his people and wanted to be with them but he is also just. He could not simply overlook their rebellion; pretend that the harm and suffering they caused didn't exist. The penalty of their rebellion was death. Each and every person deserved the death sentence but this would mean separation from God the author of life. And so, God, in his great mercy, provided for the people a substitute, something to stand in and take their place. Every year the high priest would take a goat and place his hands over it and confess all the sins of the entire people. The goat then would be sent away, cast out on its own into the wilderness as a substitute bearing the consequence of the people, who should have been cast out of God's presence in death (Lev 16).

This ritual foreshadowed the ultimate work that God had planned. No animal could ever truly be a suitable substitute for our sin. We as humans have sinned and brought about suffering and darkness in our world. We tried to step in as functional substitutes for God and we were insufficient and the only way for us to make it right was to bear our own sin, to face the penalty for our wickedness, to stand at the executioner's block for our rebellion. But God, in a great act of love, stepped forward. In Jesus he became a human and at the cross he offered up his life as a substitute for our own. The Apostle Paul wrote,

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole'"

Gal 3:13

What an incredible picture of love. Later he wrote,

"Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"

Rom 5:7-8

We did not deserve it, we did not earn it, but out of love God in Christ gave his life as a substitute for us. Are we not filled with love to know it?



Questions to Ponder:

(If you are doing this as family or with others share your answers)

1. Have you ever stepped into a situation as a substitute for someone before? Was it hard, costly?
2. Read through Matthew 27:11-26. As you do so, imagine yourself standing watching Jesus' trial as Barabbas. Share or write down what you would be thinking, how you would be feeling, knowing you had committed crimes that would lead to your death and then seeing Jesus taken in your place. How would you feel knowing Jesus was innocent and going to die and you were guilty and now going to be released?

Kids Corner:

Have you ever had a substitute teacher? If so what do you think the word substitute means? Is that teacher the same teacher you always have or someone different? It's someone different, someone who 'takes your teachers place.' The substitute's job is to do what normally your teacher would need to do, to teach you about reading or writing, math or science. It's nice that if your teacher is sick or has an emergency a substitute can come in and take his or her place. Now think about a time you did something you weren't supposed to do. Maybe you hit your brother or sister, or you lied to you parents, or you got into a fight at school. Likely there was some form of punishment or consequences for your actions. Maybe you got a time out, or lost screen time, or maybe if you were at school you were given a detention. Now how would you feel if someone offered to be your substitute? Instead of you getting a detention they would go to the office instead, or instead of losing screen time they would get lose their screen time instead. Only someone who really, really, really loved you would even think about doing that. The Bible tells us that we did something wrong towards God and we deserved to be punished. But because God really, really, really, loved us, he sent Jesus to be our substitute. When we deserved our punishment, Jesus stepped in and was punished instead of us, even though he didn't deserve it because he hadn't done anything wrong. Isn't that amazing? Let's take some time to think about some of the things we have done that aren't wrong and then take time to thank Jesus that he became our substitute and took the punishment we deserved.

Week 2

Christ as Our Substitute

Discuss | Reflect





Take a few minutes to read through the following passages of Scripture and then discuss/answer the questions below.

Read:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:6-8 (NIV)

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NIV)

Going Deeper:

1. Romans 5:6 states that we were powerless and this is why Jesus needed to step in as our substitute. What were we powerless to do?
2. What are some examples of ways you still try to save yourself instead of accepting Jesus' work on your behalf?
3. In 2 Cor 5:21, Paul writes that Jesus became a substitute for us, but in that, we also became the righteousness of God. What do you think that means?
4. In 2 Cor 5:15, Paul not only describes Jesus' substitutionary work of dying on our behalf, but also that there is a specific way we ought to respond, namely that we no longer live for ourselves but for Jesus. What are some specific examples of how your life is changing as you learn to live more and more for Jesus?
5. Food For Thought: Read through the quote, by John Stott, below and reflect more on the implications for your own life as you go throughout your day.

“The concept of substitution may be said, then, to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone.”



Week 2

Christ as Our Substitute

PRAY



Take sometime to read through the prayer below and then speak it out loud. As you do, think through each line, ask the Spirit to stir your heart and your mind to understand and feel the implications of each line of prayer.

Father, we thank you for Jesus who redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming the sin curse for us. The nails bore His body to the tree, and yet our sin condition bore His Spirit to the cross of Calvary. He who knew no sin became sin for us – what an unsurpassed substitutionary death our Savior sacrificed for us so that sin's curse could be removed and the blessings might follow; the blessings of forgiveness for sins, a home established in heaven, healing of body, mind and spirit, and the freedom from condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. What unspeakable joy fills our hearts today as we rejoice in God's goodness to us through Christ Jesus. Amen.

- Stephen & Brooksyne Weber

Pray Throughout the Day:

As you go through your day, take time to pray through the following items.

1. Ask the Spirit to continue to reveal times when you attempt to substitute yourself or something or someone else for God. When he reveals moments, take time to confess them and thank Jesus that even though you tried to substitute something for him, that instead he became a substitute for you on the cross. Ask the Spirit to grow your love and affection for Jesus as you continually see the necessity of his work.
2. When you feel like a failure, or you feel guilty or ashamed, take time to pray and ask God to continue to remind you that because of Jesus' work on your behalf, you are now declared righteous, and are free from needing to prove yourself to him, others, or yourself.
3. Pray that Jesus would reveal one person in your life that needs to know the good news that Jesus is their perfect substitute. If they feel like they are failing at life, they can know that he lived the perfect life they were supposed to live, and died in their place and so they are invited to simply rest in his love.



Week 2

Christ as Our Substitute

CELEBRATE | GO



This morning you are invited to simply take some space to worship Jesus for what he has done as our substitute. As a family or as an individual look up “Lamb of God – Vertical Worship” on YouTube and use the following words below to sing along.

Lamb of God

By Jason Ingram, Andi Rozier & Meredith Andrews

<p>[Verse 1] You came from heavens throne Acquainted with our sorrow To trade the debt we owe Your suffering for our freedom</p> <p>[Chorus] The Lamb of God in my place Your blood poured out, my sin erased It was my death You died, I am raised to life Hallelujah, the lamb of God</p> <p>[Verse 2] My name upon Your heart My shame upon Your shoulders The power of sin undone The cross for my salvation</p>	<p>[Chorus] The Lamb of God in my place Your blood poured out, my sin erased It was my death You died, I am raised to life Hallelujah, the lamb of God</p> <p>[Bridge] There is no greater love There is no greater love The Saviour lifted up There is no greater love, no There is no greater love There is no greater love The Saviour lifted up There is no greater love!</p>
---	--

Application:

Jesus became our substitute. He lived the perfect life we were meant to live and died the death we deserved and now we have been made righteous, and are invited to live for him. In Luke 9:23-25, Jesus tells his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?”

Take some time to think (and share if you are with others) one or two things that Jesus may be calling you to deny, in order to follow him. Think through categories such as possessions, time wasters, luxury items, items or times of comfort, or even things you go to for meaning and purpose instead of Jesus. Once you have identified something, then prayerfully sit down and write out a plan of how you can make a change to submit it to Jesus and share that with a family member or friend who can encourage you as you continue to seek to live for Jesus.