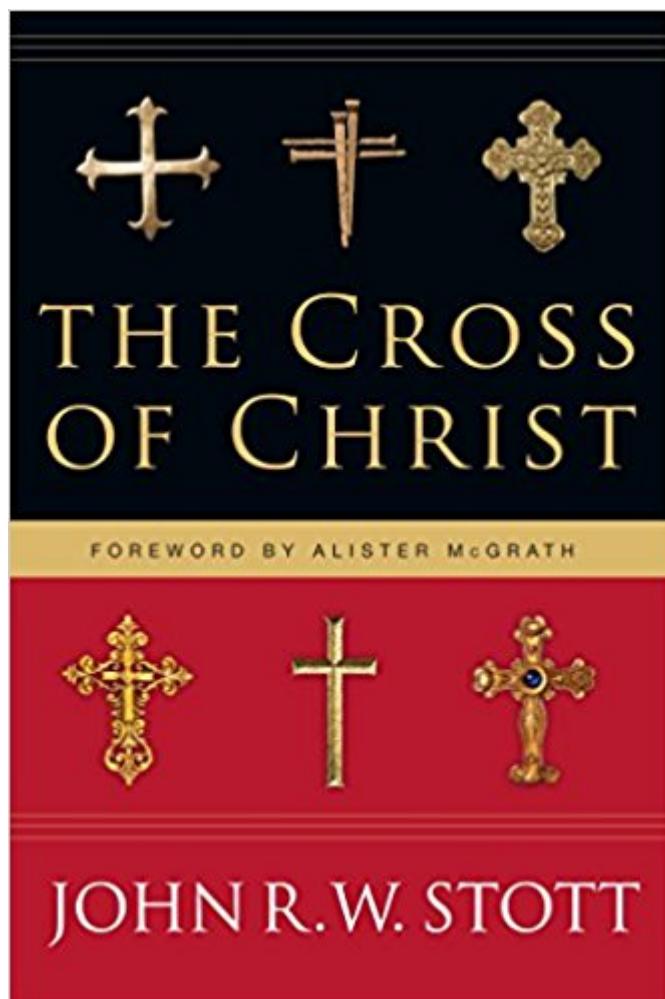


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# The Cross Of Christ



## **Synopsis**

The work of a lifetime, from one of the world's most influential thinkers, about the heart of the Christian faith. "I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross. . . . In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?" With compelling honesty John Stott confronts this generation with the centrality of the cross in God's redemption of the world -- a world now haunted by the memories of Auschwitz, the pain of oppression and the specter of nuclear war. Can we see triumph in tragedy, victory in shame? Why should an object of Roman distaste and Jewish disgust be the emblem of our worship and the axiom of our faith? And what does it mean for us today? Now from one of the foremost preachers and Christian leaders of our day comes theology at its readable best, a contemporary restatement of the meaning of the cross. At the cross Stott finds the majesty and love of God disclosed, the sin and bondage of the world exposed. More than a study of the atonement, this book brings Scripture into living dialogue with Christian theology and the twentieth century. What emerges is a pattern for Christian life and worship, hope and mission. Destined to be a classic study of the center of our faith, Stott's work is the product of a uniquely gifted pastor, scholar and Christian statesman. His penetrating insight, charitable scholarship and pastoral warmth are guaranteed to feed both heart and mind.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This is an overall fine, useful book . . . it is always a delight to learn of others who take the cross of Christ seriously and seek to tell others about it. (Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Fall 2007)[Stott's]

penetrating insight, charitable scholarship and pastoral warmth are guaranteed to feed both heart and mind. (Phil Gons, PastorBookshelf blog, June 5, 2007)"John Stott rises grandly to the challenge of the greatest of all themes. All the qualities that we expect of him—biblical precision, thoughtfulness and thoroughness, order and method, moral alertness and the measured tread, balanced judgment and practical passion—are here in fullest evidence. This, more than any book he has written, is his masterpiece." (J. I. Packer, Regent College)"Outside of the Bible itself, this may be the best book I've ever read on the cross of Christ. It is thorough, thoughtful and timely. As I read it, my mind was challenged, my heart was warmed, my faith was strengthened, and my focus was sharpened on the cross. Praise God for just giving us Jesus with nail prints in his hands and feet!" (Anne Graham Lotz, author of Just Give Me Jesus)"I read everything John Stott writes because I know it will be biblical, well-reasoned and contextually applicable. The Cross of Christ is an intelligent, imaginative and timely exploration of the centrality of the cross, by a personal mentor I've come to appreciate for his scholar's mind and pastor's heart; he knows God deeply, understands the times clearly and engagingly explains truth in a relativistic age." (Dick Staub (dickstaub.com), president of The Center for Faith and Culture, broadcaster and author of Christian Wisdom of the Jedi Masters and Too Christian, Too Pagan)"John Stott is loved and revered in our home. We have all of his writings, I believe, and in the honored center place in our bookshelf sits The Cross of Christ. My wife and I consider The Cross of Christ one of the outstanding books of all times. We refer to it often. We have given copies away and recommended it widely. We take it out as we discuss the work of the Savior and in preparation for preaching and teaching. My own personally autographed copy is all marked up. It is an outstanding exposition of scriptural truth. I believe we must saturate the churches across the world with the central truth of The Cross of Christ. Once again as a call for the history of Christianity, a fresh generation of young followers of Jesus Christ need to understand the cross of Christ. Many are weak and some are even childish spiritually for not understanding the work of the cross. Chapter six alone—"Self-Substitution of God"—is worth the whole of this rich, God-honoring, Christ-exhausting, devotional, biblical, ever-so-balanced, theologically sane and clear book." (Luis Palau, International Evangelist)"In our world of war and terror, there is nothing more important to contemplate than the cross of Christ. May Stott's reflections give us the courage to fight, with all the love within us, the war of the slaughtered Lamb. The cross teaches us there is something worth dying for but nothing worth killing for, that we can conquer evil without mirroring it. So grab this book and get ready to live real good and get beat up real bad. It is the story of our faith." (Shane Claiborne, author of The Irresistible Revolution)"I have no hesitation in saying that this is the most enriching theological book I have ever read. I read

it slowly and devotionally over a period of several months. I found that it edified and challenged me, thrilled me with the glory of the cross, and equipped me to answer some of the questions non-Christians and skeptics ask about the cross. I am happy that a new thrust is being made to introduce this great book to a new generation of Christians." (Ajith Fernando, author, Bible teacher and national director, Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka)"The passion of Paul's statement, 'I am determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified,' resonates on every page of this classic book on the centrality of the cross. What's more, Dr. Stott has validated every word with a life spent in servant leadership." (Michael Card, Bible teacher and musician)"Biblical, clear and cogent are the words that came to mind on first reading this book. The passing of time has also made it indisputable that this book is a classic which is profound in a way that few evangelical books have been in recent years. It is compelling in its simplicity and comprehensive in its grasp of the way in which God conquers our sin, our rebellion, our ghastly evil through the person of Christ. Here is truth which is true, not just because it works for me, but because it is grounded in the very being and character of God, revealed and authenticated by him, worked out in the very fabric of our history, and therefore it is truth for all time." (David F. Wells, Andrew Mutch Distinguished Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary)"For those who want an evenhanded and robust defense of the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement, John Stott's The Cross of Christ is the benchmark. With a deft hand, Stott has given us a classic articulation of this influential, evangelical doctrine that is both vigorous and readable. Books like this stand the test of time." (Tony Jones, author of The Sacred Way)"As relevant today as when it first appeared, The Cross of Christ is more than a classic. It restates in our own time the heart of the Christian message. Like John the Baptist, John Stott points us away from the distractions that occupy so much of our energies in order, announcing, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (Michael Horton, professor of theology and apologetics, Westminster Seminary California)"Rarely does a volume of theology combine six cardinal virtues, but John Stott's The Cross of Christ does so magnificently. It says what must be said about the cross; it gently but firmly warns against what must not be said; it grounds its judgments in biblical texts, again and again; it hierarchizes its arguments so that the main thing is always the main thing; it is written with admirable clarity; and it is so cast as to elicit genuine worship and thankfulness from any thoughtful reader. There are not many 'must read' books—books that belong on every minister's shelf, and on the shelves of thoughtful laypersons who want a better grasp of what is central in Scripture—but this is one of them." (D. A. Carson, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School)

eatures & Benefits \* A masterpiece from one of the most respected Christian teachers\* Explores all the facets of the cross and its implication for our lives\* A classic study on the heart of the Christian faith\* Examines Scripture, tradition and modern experience with regard to the cross\* Biblically precise, thoughtful, thorough and filled with practical passion\* 1987 Eternity Book of the Year\* Winner of a 1988 Evangelical Christian Publishers Association Gold Medallion Award\* Now with a study guide and a new foreword by Alister McGrath

John Stott does an excellent work in this great book on the Cross. He covers in depth the atonement - substitution - death of Jesus. This book is a classic on this topic. The meaning of the cross is presented in a way that will help. Currently reading again this great information. I greatly recommend this work and I call it a work for that is exactly what it is - a great work on the cross of Jesus.

Certainly the classic work focusing on the Cross itself. Why did Christ have to die? What did His death accomplish? How central was the Cross to Jesus Himself, to the Gospel writers and to the Apostle writers? Why was the wrath of God fixed on Christ on the Cross? Could there have been any other way to satisfy humanity's debt to a holy God?. Sobering!

Stott's work is to guide his readers through a definitive biblical journey to the meaning and application of the cross of Christ. He reveals a biblical picture of God as, not only, all powerful to overcome the cross but as compassionate, to willingly suffer injustice, physical and emotional pain in our place. The God of the Bible is not one of only just wrath and hatred of evil, indifferent to the suffering of humanity but one who is compelled by hatred of evil to endure the the worst of suffering with us and for us. This is a must read for anyone seeking to have or understand a biblical Christology.

John Stott, with precision and palpability, puts forth a comprehensive look at the cross and the substitutionary atonement that it achieved. And this is what Stott argues throughout the course of the whole work; namely, that "the biblical doctrine of atonement is substitutionary from beginning to end." He achieves this goal, and in doing so, offers not only a theological work that enflames the intellect, but inspires the heart to worship God for the sacrifice and love that he has so graciously demonstrated and effected. Though it is difficult to review such a magnum opus on the topic and reality of the cross, I will seek to review the work in terms of its

overall structure, rhetorical prowess, and offer a few minor critiques, or questions for further exploration.

**Structure of the Work** Before setting out on his detailed explication of the cross of Christ, Stott sets up the parameters within which he will work: “In developing my theme, I have had in mind the triangle of Scripture, tradition, and the modern world” (17). I hold that in this approach, Stott seeks to be Biblically faithful, traditionally responsible, and culturally sensitive. This approach will be sure to make this a work of lasting influence for the study of Christology and the worship of Christ. This work, presented in four parts, demonstrates a key feature of Stott’s ability to write and sustain a comprehensive and cogent argument. The overall flow of his presentation begins with “Approaching the Cross,” moving to “The Heart of the Cross,” on to “The Achievement of the Cross,” and concluding with “Living Under the Cross.” Within Part I, readers are made aware of the necessity and centrality of the cross. Christ’s death was central to his mission, and it was central to his mission because at the cross he achieved the bloody and messy work of redemption. Stott then moves on to Part II where he will discuss the heart of the cross. At the beginning of Part II, readers can observe our plight in human sinfulness through Stott’s careful biblical exegesis, as well as his treatment of the Church tradition (ie. his engagement with Anselm on p.90). Always keen to provide thorough and biblical definitions for key terms, Stott starts to bolster his position on a satisfaction theory of the atonement that is held in conjunction with the self-substitution of god. Again, in a way that only Stott can, he strikes a nerve when he writes the words on the dual manifestations of substitution. In Part III, I was hard pressed to not type out all of my underlinings and notations—chiefly because Stott was talking about me, a sinner, and the salvation offered to us. I found this Part of the work to preach right through me. And I appreciated Stott’s inclusion of the resurrection alongside the crucifixion in his section on the conquest of evil. And naturally, in Part IV, Stott moves on to the implications that the cross has for those who live under it. And while I did not enjoy all sections in this particular portion of the work, he offers up great contributions for corporate worship, the celebration of the sacraments, and the fellowship within the body. And he concludes his work in a wonderfully encouraging fashion. He acknowledges our sufferings, and magnificently rearticulates our union with Christ: “It is wonderful that we may share in Christ’s sufferings; it is more wonderful still that he shares in ours” (326).

**Rhetorical Prowess** This work was anything but drudgery. Stott all throughout showcased wonderful narrative leading and retelling of key Biblical events. He also heavily employed rhetorical questions to

inductively draw in the reader. This contributed to his overall engaging style and logical progressions. In addition, he employs the use of rich imagery and helpful analogies. I especially enjoyed the imagery that juxtaposed the world and the cross where he writes, “Apathy, selfishness and complacency blossom everywhere in the world except at the cross. There these noxious weeds shrivel and die” (85). But Stott’s rhetorical sophistication does not end with his narrative abilities – they are also expressed in his sophisticated logical orderings and presentations. These would not be possible without his established definitions (ie. imputation, propitiation, substitute, representative, etc.). And he employs these as building blocks for the structuring of his arguments (especially in my favorite section on the images of salvation on pp.166 ff). After he makes these sophisticated and faithful assertions, he is always mindful of the reader and offers his rearticulations that help to prod the reader along. Critiques I do not have much to offer by way of criticism on this work, but there are a few things that I would have liked to have seen explained more thoroughly. The first area has to deal with the scope of the atonement. I was able to only detect one instance where he alluded to the scope of the atonement, and it needed more explanation: “But the beneficiaries change from the world to the world.” He could have offered an explanation on his definition of “the world.” However, like Anselm, it could have been an intentional avoidance of addressing for the sake of the overall contribution, but one that I would have liked to have seen nonetheless. There was only one section in the entire volume that I did not care for and it was the section in Part IV that dealt with the state (pp.296-301). It seemed a little forced in this section and seemed to operate out of the presupposition that the state is intrinsically an enemy (by virtue of its placement in the chapter “Loving Our Enemies”). I would love to do some comparative analysis on this point to see if this section was added after the original edition was published. Even in light of these minor critiques, Stott still achieved the goal that he set out to accomplish: he provided a clear and comprehensive look at the cross. This work has marks and elements present that will make it an enduring classic, filled with enough content for the academy as well as the pulpit.

I am about half way through the book and am finding it fascinating. The author takes you step by step through the meaning of the cross, what past christians have thought about different aspects of the cross and what Christ accomplished. I find I have a better understanding of the reasoning

behind differing theologies. As far as witnessing, I feel I have a stronger base to speak from. Hope you get a chance to enjoy this book. God bless.

I did not think you could say so much about the Cross of Jesus but this book is well written and lots and lots of Biblical references. I learned so much. If you are responsible for communion meditations this is an excellent resource. Get your high lighter out from the beginning.

I ordered this book for my Theology II class at CBU and actually dread reading it because of the heavy concepts but I found this book a easy read and well organized format to follow. Stott does a good job spelling out Reformed thought on the nature of the cross that makes it tangible for Christain application. I would highly recommend this book for anyone who wants clarity of the meaning of the cross.

Scott does an amazing job in this comprehensive work on the cross. He approaches this central symbol of faith from every angle, showing its prominence, importance, and necessity. He also does an excellent job answering various objections and other view points. Jesus is the preeminent character in faith, history, and the Christian meta-narrative, and the cross is at the center of his life and mission, so we do well to boast in the cross alone.

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