



# Liberated at the Cross

Peace and Reconciliation  
in God's Kingdom

Kristel Acevedo



InterVarsity Press  
ivpress.com

Taken from *Liberated at the Cross* by Kristel Acevedo.

Copyright ©2026 by Made for PAX.

Published by InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.

[www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com).



InterVarsity Press

*Copyrighted content.*

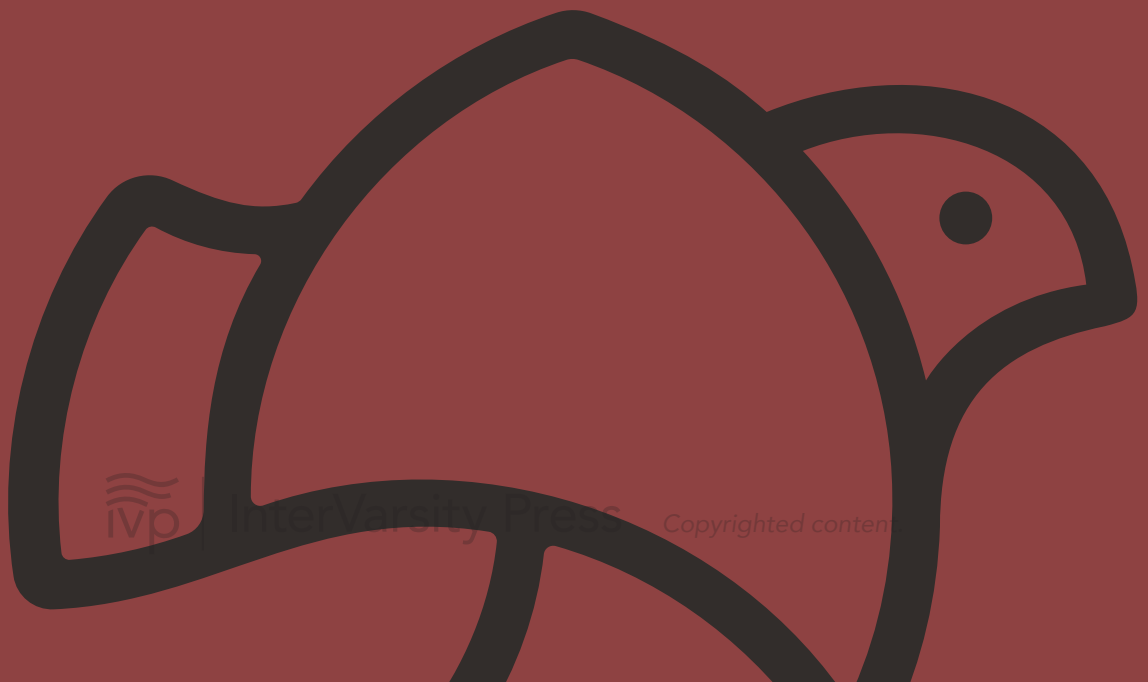
# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>01</b>
<b>Session One: Fulfillment</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Session Two: Liberation</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Session Three: Solidarity</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Session Four: Self-Giving Love</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Session Five: Nonviolent Resistance</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Session Six: Enemy Love</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Notes</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Journaling Pages</b>	<b>100</b>

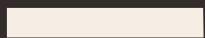


**INTRODUCTION**

# **Liberated at the Cross**



# With PEACE



InterVarsity Press • [www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com)

Do you believe the world can be changed?  
Your relationships mended?  
Your past addressed?  
Your future improved?  
Do you believe our churches can be more engaged?  
Our land healed?  
Our bodies protected?  
Our politics reformed?

With *PEACE*, this is possible.  
With the Peace of Jesus, born of the cross—  
All things are being made new.

The cross is more than the method God used to save us.  
The cross is also the model for Christian living.

# Welcome

*Welcome to this six-week study on peace and reconciliation!*

In this study, we focus on one critical aspect of God's story of peace: the work of the cross. Only when we understand the meaning of the cross and how the cross influences humanity and the world can we begin to perceive God's vision for the restoration of shalom in the world. Only then can we have a fuller picture of the role that God calls us to in that restoration.

This study invites you into understanding the significance of the cross of Jesus, and how it serves as the gateway to peace. By the time you complete all six sessions, you will: (1) learn how to look to the cross for hope and power to pursue peace; (2) gain a biblical understanding of how the cross impacts your discipleship journey; and (3) learn how to apply these principles in pursuit of a cross-shaped life in your everyday contexts.

Most importantly, this study offers you a better way to pursue peace and love in your community, one marked by sacrifice, nonviolence, and liberation for all people.



# How to Use this Study

*Here is a bird's-eye view of our six-week study:*

**MEANING** - What is conveyed through the cross of Jesus

<b>Session One</b>	<b>Fulfillment</b>	The cross of Jesus is where the Scriptures find their climax.
<b>Session Two</b>	<b>Liberation</b>	The cross empowers Jesus to liberate the world from the power of death, sin, and unjust systems.
<b>Session Three</b>	<b>Solidarity</b>	The cross is where Jesus fully displays the solidarity of God with those who are oppressed by the powers of empire.

**METHOD** - The technique by which God accomplishes peace

<b>Session Four</b>	<b>Self-Giving Love</b>	Followers of Jesus are called to embody the cross of Jesus through self-giving love.
<b>Session Five</b>	<b>Nonviolent Resistance</b>	Followers of Jesus learn from the cross that we are to resist evil and injustice in the world.
<b>Session Six</b>	<b>Enemy Love</b>	Followers of Jesus learn from the cross that we are to forgive and love our enemies as a way to break the cycle of dehumanization.



## EACH SESSION

**01 Session Topic:** Presents an overview of the week's topic.

**02 Preparation:** Provides an opportunity to prepare for the study through prayer and reflection questions.

**03 Manifesto–Scripture Reading:** Includes a Scripture reading that serves as the manifesto statement (declaration) for the session.

**04 Myth & Material–Eight to Ten Minute Video:** Offers a video that covers the Myth (lies we believe) and Material (central truths) for the session.

**05 Small Group Discussion:** Prompts group discussion with questions. Discussion is the central part of this journey, where you have the opportunity to allow the Spirit of God to move you in the direction you should go.

**06 Motion-Embodied Action:** Concludes with a Motion section for you to practice throughout the following week and lead you toward more concrete embodied action.

## ENGAGING THIS STUDY

Set aside a designated day and time for a weekly gathering—in person or virtually—for the next six weeks. The Introduction offers foundational thoughts and the opportunity for reflection that will frame the subsequent weeks. The session videos are accessed through the QR codes in the book. These videos were created with a group in mind—that you would watch the video together and then immediately engage in the content that follows. But individuals still have personal access to the videos, in case someone misses a group gathering. At the end of each session, participants are given prompts that encourage reflection on the session's key themes throughout the week.



# Remembering the Cross

I was texting with a friend early one morning. She felt discouraged as the news of a crisis in Cuba spread across social media. And she was disappointed by the response of politicians and organizations—people she voted for and trusted to fight for the oppressed.

Due to extreme shortages of food and medicine, a series of protests against the Cuban government began in July 2021. The situation in Cuba was already dire, but the Covid-19 pandemic had made everything worse. The Cuban people were suffering.

My friend and I were both raised in Miami, Florida, the Latin American capital of the United States. Immigrants from all over the world—but especially Latin America—pour into this city. Cuba itself is only ninety miles from the coast of Florida. The streets of Miami buzz with salsa music, and the sweet nectar of *cafecito* runs through our veins. The influence of Cuban culture is evident in every corner of our city.

So, when our people cry out in anguish, we not only hear it, we feel it.

What could I tell my friend who was feeling hopeless and powerless in this dire situation? What could I possibly point her to when people in positions of power were failing us on all sides? Who would stand for the oppressed? Who would fight for justice? Who would speak up for those who have no voice?

I remembered the cross. The cross was a barbaric tool of torture in the ancient Roman world. It was a brutal form of execution meant to instill fear in all who witnessed the practice. Bodies were hung on wooden beams for days so that anyone who walked by would be reminded of their fate if they dared speak against the regime.

*Who will fight  
for justice?*



That's how dictatorships work too. Dictators rule over a country and crush anyone who speaks against them. They withhold food, medicine, and basic necessities to show how they can easily wield their power. Witnesses of the horrors and injustices are filled with fear that they could be silenced next.

*The power  
of Jesus lives  
in us.*

But something else happened when Jesus was crucified. Was it horrible and evil? Of course. Jesus was subjected to inconceivable physical pain, and sin and evil were poured onto Jesus' shoulders. However, Jesus remained undefeated. He resurrected. And the same power that lives in him now lives in us.

## *Meaning of the Cross*

*We look to the meaning of the cross for our power and hope in a world longing for the peace of God.*

The cross is one of the most distinct symbols of Christianity. As a child, my family attended mass at our local Catholic church. Behind the altar was a crucifix. I remember wondering how on earth this—a beaten man hanging on a bloodied cross—could be an adored symbol. How could this be a picture of God's love?

To the world, the cross is foolish. Crucifixion was nothing to be celebrated in ancient times. Hanging on a cross was degrading. It meant you were a criminal. It meant you were subhuman, shamed, and tortured. It meant God had forgotten you.

When Jesus was crucified, many decided he couldn't be who he said he was. Clearly, he was a madman or a con artist. Even his disciples were confused. Had they been following a fraud this entire time? Could they have been wrong about Jesus being the Messiah?

But then the resurrection occurred. Now we know the truth of Jesus. As his disciples, we recognize that what sounded foolish to the world was God's wisdom and love for us.



For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of the proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews ask for signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to gentiles. (1 Corinthians 1:18-23)

For the Christ-follower, the cross represents love, hope, joy, and peace. God’s mercy for us is put on full display as Jesus willingly went to the cross to create a path back to God. Despite our own disobedience and propensity for sin, he still chooses us. He still loves us. He still frees us from sin, death, and evil. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, a torturous death on a cross (Philippians 2:8).

The cross ushers in God’s upside-down kingdom. God’s kingdom isn’t about being the most powerful, strongest, or best. It’s about God’s power showing up in our weakness and gaining victory through sacrifice. Jesus knew that on the other side of that cross would be an indescribable joy that we would share in (Hebrews 12:2). We get to be reunited with God for eternity.

The cross may have been an evil tool used by the Romans, but we know that God is in the business of taking the evil of this world and using it for good. God used the cross to bring about forgiveness for our sins. He used it to rescue us from death and separation from him, and to bring the restoration of shalom.

Through this divine victory, Jesus is beginning to bring liberation from all the spiritual forces that manifest in oppression all around us. Now that we have been made righteous, we are called as followers of Jesus to live into the reality of our freedom, and to work toward making freedom a reality for all right now.

At the cross is where God begins to make all things new. And we get to join him on that mission. As followers of Christ, we too bring love, hope, joy, and peace everywhere we go. The cross is our example that shows us how we can press against the patterns of this world and follow the better way of Jesus.

*The cross ushers  
in God’s  
upside-down  
kingdom.*



## Method of the Cross

### *The cross of Jesus provides patterns that shape the way we follow Jesus.*

The cross is not simply the source of personal, social, and spiritual liberation. The cross also provides a shape for how Christians are to live, think, and act in the world. Although some people believe that the purpose of the cross is only to pardon humanity, the New Testament is clear that the cross is also the pattern we conform our lives to and live into as God's people. Thus, we look to the method of the cross as the *shape* of the Christian life.

This is called *cruciformity*.<sup>1</sup> New Testament scholar Michael Bird says, "The cross is not merely a tenet of faith that we are required to assent to; it is a manifesto we are to follow. Christians are not called merely to believe in the cross, but more properly to live it out."<sup>2</sup>

When we look at Scripture, we can identify three principles—self-giving love, nonviolent resistance, and enemy love—that provide a framework for cruciformity to promote peace in this world. As we explore these principles, we will learn what it means to be conformed to the image of Christ. We will learn how to be agents of peace in a world that doesn't understand why we would want to join Jesus on the cross. Faithfulness to the cross is rebellion against the world. It shows the world who we are, that we will continue to love people and pursue peace because that's what our God does.

**Christians are called to live out the cross.**

I think back to my friend and the many others who wondered how to respond to crises in Cuba. We know that, because of the cross, we are not powerless. We are powerful. We also know that the world may not recognize our power. While the world may use force or violence, we are marked by peace and love. We show a broken world a path that leads to wholeness—*shalom*.

So, how do we do that? We sacrifice our time and resources to bring awareness and relief when and where we can. We resist wrongdoing and oppression, and speak up for the oppressed. We love our enemies, which includes the oppressor, because we know that we also need the love of Jesus. We offer forgiveness to all because God does not withhold forgiveness from anyone.

The Cuban people and all who are suffering in this world are not forgotten—not by God and not by God's people.



**BUY THE BOOK!**

[ivpress.com/liberated-at-the-cross](http://ivpress.com/liberated-at-the-cross)



InterVarsity Press

*Copyrighted content.*