

Was it His Choice?

1. Jesus's death providing a needed sacrifice to make us right with God.
2. Did Jesus die willingly?

A Cosmic Abuser

3. People tie the idea of God being a cosmic abuser to human sacrifice.
4. The nations surrounding Israel practiced human sacrifice.
 - Deut. 12:31 – God condemns that activity.
 - Ezek. 16:20-22 – God exiled them because of child sacrifice.
5. Skeptics point to passages describing something that happened historically.
 - 2 Kings 17:17, 21:6, 23:10
 - Psalms 106:37-38
 - Isaiah 57:5-6
 - Jeremiah 7:31
6. The most understood account is God asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.
 - God didn't allow him to actually do it.
 - God showed He didn't want a human sacrifice.
 - He tested his faith, then provided a substitute.

The Three P's

7. Planned - Jesus knew He would suffer and die.
8. Purposeful – Jesus knew why He would suffer and die.
9. Personal – Jesus chose to die.

Why Have You Forsaken Me?

10. King David wrote these words 1000 years earlier (Psalm 22).
11. The Messiah's story ends in victory!

Key Points

- (a) God explicitly, repeatedly and clearly condemns human sacrifice in the Bible.
- (b) Jesus' death was planned, purposeful and personal. He knew *that* He would die, He knew *why* He would die and He *chose* to die..
- (c) Jesus is fully God, so He sacrificed His *own* life as payment for sin.
- (d) Jesus' cry on the cross was a reference to Psalm 22. It shows that despite His anguish, the story ends in victory.

How do we talk to our Kids about this?

Opener

- In the previous chapter, we learned why God asked for animal sacrifices in the Old Testament and how Jesus's death was a perfect, final sacrifice for us. But do you think that Jesus wanted to sacrifice himself for sin? Why or why not?
 - *(Help your child consider why the question matters. If Jesus didn't go to the cross willingly, it means he was a helpless victim like animals were.)*

Going Further

- Do you think it's possible that Jesus ended up dying on the cross because of bad luck—for example, because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time?
 - *(No. Jesus predicted his death multiple times and claimed that it was part of a plan with a purpose—to give his life for us. Read Mark 10:45.)*
- Read John 10:11, 15, and 17–18. What do these verses tell us about Jesus's willingness to go to the cross?
 - *(It was his choice.)*
- In ancient cultures, people killed their own children as a sacrifice to keep the gods they believed in happy. Some people today compare Jesus's sacrifice on the cross to those ancient child sacrifices and claim that Jesus's death means God is cruel. How are these two kinds of sacrifices different?
 - *(Jesus wasn't a victim of someone else's choice because he's God himself; he chose to sacrifice his own life. Review the nature of the Trinity if needed. Read the passages condemning human sacrifice in the Bible and explain the account of Abraham and Isaac.)*
- When Jesus took his last breaths on the cross, he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Why do you think he said that if he willingly died for us?
- *(Explain that this was a reference to Psalm 22, which begins with anguish—as in the cross—and ends in victory—as in the resurrection. Read the psalm together.)*

Application

- How would you respond to this quote from the author of, "The Shack"
 - *Who originated the Cross? If God did, then we worship a cosmic abuser, who in Divine Wisdom created a means to torture human beings in the most painful and abhorrent manner. Frankly, it is often this very cruel and monstrous god that the atheist refuses to acknowledge or grant credibility in any sense. And rightly so. Better no god at all, than this one.*