

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Sunday, March 12th

During this season leading up to Easter, we will be sharing a devotional reading from John Piper's *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die* for each week's Family Devotional Guide. A suggested plan would be to simply read the devotional one day, discuss it another day, and then spend a third day looking up and discussing the Scripture references he cites. Note that the complete devotional is available for free:

<https://www.desiringgod.org/books/fifty-reasons-why-jesus-came-to-die>

“To Please His Heavenly Father”

(Isaiah 53:10; Ephesians 5:2)

Jesus did not wrestle his angry Father to the floor of heaven and take the whip out of his hand. He did not force him to be merciful to humanity. His death was not the begrudging consent of God to be lenient to sinners. No, what Jesus did when he suffered and died was the Father's idea. It was a breathtaking strategy, conceived even before creation, as God saw and planned the history of the world. That is why the Bible speaks of God's "purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began" (2 Timothy 1:9).

Already in the Jewish Scriptures the plan was unfolding. The prophet Isaiah foretold the sufferings of the Messiah, who was to take the place of sinners. He said that the Christ would be "smitten by God" in our place.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities. . . . All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6)

But what is most astonishing about this substitution of Christ for sinners is that it was God's idea. Christ did not intrude on God's plan to punish sinners. God planned for him to be there. One Old Testament prophet says, "It was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief" (Isaiah 53:10).

This explains the paradox of the New Testament. On the one hand, the suffering of Christ is an outpouring of God's wrath because of sin. But on the other hand, Christ's suffering is a beautiful act of submission and obedience to the will of the Father. So Christ cried from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). And yet the Bible says that the suffering of Christ was a fragrance to God. "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:2).

Oh, that we might worship the terrible wonder of the love of God! It is not sentimental. It is not simple. For our sake God did the impossible: He poured out his wrath on his own Son—the one whose submission made him infinitely unworthy to receive it. Yet the Son's very willingness to receive it was precious in God's sight. The wrath-bearer was infinitely loved.