

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE: The Cross-Shaped Life

Theme: Living a life shaped by the cross — love that gives, not keeps.

Opening Prayer

Lord, as we gather around Your Word, quiet our hearts and clear our minds. Let every distraction fade away as Your Spirit speaks truth into us. Shape us by the power of Your cross — to love not just in words, but in action and in truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Read: 1 John 3:11–18 (NLT)

Listen to this song: “Lead Me to the Cross” (Hillsong)

Reflection: The shape of Love is the shape of the Cross

John draws two portraits — *Cain and Christ*. Cain represents **self-centeredness**, Christ represents **self-sacrifice**. The question John asks us to wrestle with is simple but searching:

“Which shape is forming you — the world’s, or the shape of the cross?”

To live a *cross-shaped life* means choosing love when it costs something. It means giving when it’s easier to keep, forgiving when it’s easier to resent, and serving when comfort whispers “protect yourself.” This is not sentimental love, but *sacrificial love* — the kind that bears another’s burden.

Discussion Questions

- How does John define “real love” in this passage?
- Why do you think he uses the story of Cain as a contrast to Christ?
- What does it mean that “Jesus laid down His life” (v.16)?

Personal Reflection

- When do you most feel the pull of “self-preservation”?
- Can you recall a time when loving someone cost you — time, comfort, or pride?
- How did that experience shape your understanding of Christ’s love?

Community Application

- What would “cross-shaped love” look like in our local community this week?
- How could our group act together to meet a practical need?
- How might God be inviting you personally to “lay something down” for someone else’s good?

For Contemplation

Where is God asking you to place something down this week — an attitude, a right, a resource, or a resentment — so that His love can take shape in you? Spend a few moments in silence asking the Spirit to show you. Then, share (if comfortable) one small way you'll respond.

Or:

Speak these together aloud:

- I am shaped by the cross — not by the world's fears.
- Christ's love flows through me in action and in truth.
- I choose generosity over greed, compassion over comparison.
- The same Spirit who raised Jesus empowers me to live a life of love.
- I lay down my life daily, and through it, God's love is made visible.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for showing us what love truly is — a love that lays itself down.

Forgive us when we cling to comfort or choose self over service.

By Your Spirit, shape our hearts into the pattern of Your cross.

May our lives speak Your love in every word, every deed, every act of compassion.

In Your precious name, Amen.