

**SONGS**

for

**THE  
CROSS  
CENTERED  
LIFE**

Sovereign Grace Music



**Welcome to what you were  
made for.**

This CD was inspired by a little orange book called *The Cross Centered Life*, by C.J. Mahaney. Maybe you've read it. The book was written to help instruct our wayward hearts and to remind our forgetful souls that there is one glorious, overwhelming truth that should inhabit the very core of our existence.

It's the gospel. Christ died to save sinners. That's the main thing.

And that's the reason these songs were written. You can think of them as a soundtrack to the book.

Read. Sing. Worship.

Do you want to be reminded of the centrality of the cross? Read chapter one of *The Cross Centered Life*, right here in this booklet.

Do you want to be reminded of the essence of the gospel? Sing the lyrics to these songs. Each verse, each chorus directs our minds and hearts to some truth about the cross.

As we consider this cross, we want to worship the One who made it possible. Our hearts are stirred to praise the Son who died for us, and the Father who sent Him, out of love. For a life that is cross centered is a life that delights in such worship.

The cross of Christ is the heart of the Christian faith and the pivot point of history. It's simple enough for a child to grasp, yet no amount of study or meditation can comprehend its full wonder and significance.

When this life is over, sinners who have been counted righteous through the sacrifice of Jesus will gather around the throne of the Lamb of God. There we will join our voices in worship, a perfect music from pure hearts, presented to the only One worthy of praise.

But we don't have to wait for that day. We're not supposed to wait. We can, and should, look to the cross now. We can, we must, worship God for the cross now.

That's why this CD was created.

Because that's what we were made for.

**Read**

**Sing**

## **1. The Gospel Song**

Holy God, in love, became  
perfect Man to bear my blame. On  
the cross He took my sin. By His  
death I live again.

Words, Drew Jones © 2002 Sovereign Grace  
Worship (ASCAP) / Music, Bob Kauflin © 2002 Sovereign  
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## **The Cross Centered Life**

by C.J. Mahaney

**Chapter One** Restating the  
Obvious: The Most Important Truth Is  
the Easiest to Forget

Timothy's hands trembled as he read. He almost cradled the letter, as though his gentleness with the parchment would somehow be conveyed to its author, now chained in a cold Roman dungeon.

The letter came from the apostle Paul; it would be his last.

For years Timothy had pushed the thought of losing Paul out of his mind. Paul had been like a father. A friend and mentor who guided and instructed the young pastor. How could he minister without Paul's reassuring words, his confidence, his prayers? But now, Timothy knew Paul's death was imminent.

"I am already being poured out like a drink offering," Paul wrote, "and the time has come for my departure" (2 Timothy 4:6).

Timothy read the closing lines of the letter through his tears. But then he stopped and pushed them away abruptly. How could he wallow in grief when his old friend faced death so boldly?

He could almost hear the voice of Paul through the words on the page:

## 2. The Glories of Calvary

**Verse 1** Lord, You're calling me to come and behold the wondrous cross. To explore the depths of grace that came to me at such a cost. Where Your boundless love conquered my boundless sin, and mercy's arms were opened wide.

**Chorus** My heart is filled with a thousand songs, proclaiming the glories of Calvary. With every breath, Lord, how I long to sing of Jesus who died for me. Lord, take me deeper into the glories of Calvary.

**Verse 2** Sinners find eternal joy in the triumph of Your wounds. By our Savior's crimson flow, holy wrath has been removed. And Your saints below join with Your saints above, rejoicing in the Risen Lamb.

Steve & Vikki Cook © 2003 Sovereign Grace  
Worship (ASCAP)

### 3. Jesus, My Only Hope

**Verse 1** I come into Your presence with nothing in my hands. I only bring thanksgiving for Jesus, God and man. I cast myself on mercy, I cast myself on love. I trust Your gracious promise to wash me with Your blood.

**Verse 2** I will not fear Your judgment. For me, no wrath I dread. For it was spent on Jesus, poured out upon His head. When Satan's accusations make my poor heart afraid, I hear my King declaring, "Father, that debt is paid."

**Chorus** Jesus my only hope, my only plea. My righteousness, my Great High Priest, who intercedes for me before the throne. Jesus, I trust in You alone.

**Verse 3** Though I am poor and naked—Your prodigal come home—You place Your robe upon me, Your holiness alone. Though I be dry and barren, by grace this love springs forth: love for You and Your Kingdom, joy in Your glory, Lord.

Mark Altrogge © 2002 Sovereign Grace Praise (BMI)  
Song also recorded on *All We Long to See*

"Keep your head in all situations, endure hardship...discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5).

Now Timothy began to read the letter again. He read slowly, deliberately. His eyes bored into each word, each sentence. In the closing moments of Paul's life, would God give him a flash of insight that he would pass on to Timothy? Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, a man who had been swept up into heaven itself (see 2 Corinthians 12:2-4). What special insight, like a long forgotten key, would he now reveal?

As Timothy read, heart pounding, the truth—the key—hit him with piercing clarity. He saw more clearly than ever what Paul had given his life to—and for which Timothy, too, would spend himself.

The message of Paul's final letter revealed no new truth, no hidden knowledge, just "one truth" he had given his life to spread. *The good news. The news of the cross.*

And now the letter, which at first reading had been to Timothy the obituary of his dearest friend, became a joy-

filled, bold restatement of all Paul had lived for, and all he would soon die for.

“Of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. . . . I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed” (2 Timothy 1:11–12).

The words seemed to shout from the page: “What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13).

Timothy could almost see Paul’s fiery eyes blazing into his own, feel his gnarled fingers gripping his arm. “Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us” (2 Timothy 1:14).

You don’t need a new truth, he heard his old friend saying. Guard the *one* truth. Keep the *one* message.

“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel” (2 Timothy 2:8).

#### 4. **Wonderful Savior**

**Verse 1** How can we not sing out to the One who saved us and covered us with Your blood, casting all our sin into Your sea of mercy, crowning us with Your love?

**Chorus** Wonderful Savior, beautiful Jesus, bending down to lift us up out of our darkness, into Your brightness—calling us Your own. Wonderful Savior, beautiful Jesus, we will always love You. Wonderful Savior, beautiful Jesus.

**Verse 2** How can we not sing out to the One who changed us and gave us eternal hope, capturing our hearts, flooding us with gladness, that someday we’ll see Your face?

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## 5. The Glory of the Cross

**Verse 1** What wisdom once devised the plan where all our sin and pride was placed upon the perfect Lamb, who suffered, bled, and died? The wisdom of a Sovereign God, whose greatness will be shown when those who crucified Your Son rejoice around Your throne.

**Chorus** And oh the glory of the cross, that You would send Your Son for us. I gladly count my life as loss, that I might come to know the glory of the cross.

**Verse 2** What righteousness was there revealed that sets the guilty free, that justifies ungodly men and calls the filthy clean? A righteousness that proved to all Your justice has been met, and holy wrath is satisfied through one atoning death.

**Verse 3** What mercy now has been proclaimed, for those who would believe—a love incomprehensible, our minds could not conceive? A mercy that forgives my sin, then makes me like Your Son, and now I'm loved forever-more because of what You've done.

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Song also recorded on *King of Grace*

## The Message

The apostle Paul recognized the universal danger of forgetting what is most important. He refused to be pulled away from the gospel.

The cross was the centerpiece of Paul's theology. It wasn't merely *one* of Paul's messages; it was *the* message. He taught about other things as well, but whatever he taught was always derived from, and related to, the foundational reality that *Jesus Christ died so that sinners would be reconciled to God and forgiven by God.*

Theologian D. A. Carson writes of Paul, "He cannot long talk about Christian joy, or Christian ethics, or Christian fellowship, or the Christian doctrine of God, or anything else, without finally tying it to the cross. Paul is gospel-centered; he is cross centered."<sup>1</sup>

From his first epistle to his final letter to Timothy, Paul kept the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus at the center of his teaching. He "resolved to know nothing...except



Jesus Christ and him crucified”  
(1 Corinthians 2:2).

And this wasn't a cold theological formula, either. Paul lived a cross centered life because the cross had saved and transformed his own life.

Writing thirty years after his conversion, Paul's memory of what he had once been, and what God had done for him, remained at the forefront of his mind. "Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man," he wrote Timothy, "I was shown mercy"  
(1 Timothy 1:13).

### **Never Forget**

I can relate to Paul's amazement at being shown mercy. I've lived in the same part of Maryland since I was a boy. Hardly a month goes by that I'm not reminded of who I once was.

Before God saved me in 1972, I, too, was a blasphemer. I lived for myself and my own pleasure. I lived in rebellion against God and mocked those who followed Him. I spent my high school and college years deeply immersed in the local drug culture.

## **6. This Fathomless Love**

**Verse 1** Lord, what moved Your heart to love lowly man before any star could herald Your praise? And why did You come, abasing Yourself, veiled in a robe of frail human clay? Why would You, the pure, give Your life for the vile, the innocent seeking the guilty to be reconciled?

**Chorus** I can't comprehend this fathomless love. I'm gripped and amazed at what You have done. Why would the adored become the despised to bear all the furious wrath that was mine? How awesome this mystery of Your fathomless love for me.

**Verse 2** Why would You adopt and take as Your own those who had crushed Your one precious Son? Why mercy and grace towards Your enemies? Your name they have cursed and Your throne they have shunned. Oh how could You choose to show kindness to these? The ones who would mock You and hate You, the ones just like me?

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Worship (ASCAP)

Song also recorded on *Everlasting*

## 7. The Look

**Verse 1** I saw one hanging on a tree in agony and blood, who fixed His loving eyes on me as near His cross I stood. And never till my dying breath will I forget that look. It seemed to charge me with His death, though not a word He spoke.

**Verse 2** My conscience felt and owned the guilt, and plunged me in despair. I saw my sins His blood had spilt, and helped to nail Him there. But with a second look He said, "I freely all forgive. This blood is for your ransom paid. I died that you might live."

**Chorus** Forever etched upon my mind is the look of Him who died, the Lamb I crucified. And now my life will sing the praise of pure atoning grace, that looked on me and gladly took my place.

**Verse 3** Thus while His death my sin displays for all the world to view, such is the mystery of grace: It seals my pardon too. With pleasing grief and mournful joy, my spirit now is filled—that I should such a life destroy yet live by Him I killed.

Words, John Newton (1725–1807) / Music and new and alternate lyrics, Bob Kauflin © 2001 Sovereign Grace Praise (BMI)

Song also recorded on *Upward: The Bob Kauflin Hymns Project*

Sometimes, late at night, my friends and I would seek out quiet, isolated places where we could come down safely from drug highs. On more than a few occasions it was a D.C. monument. Other times a peaceful street under thick, deep trees. Or even the terminal at what was then a little-used airport called Dulles, where the doors stayed open long after the day's flights had ceased and we could move through the nearly deserted canyon of a building.

Someday soon I'll be near one of those places again, and the memories will flood back in. I'll remember what I once was, and be reminded of what I now am.

Often my eyes fill with tears at the memories of my foolishness and sin. And in the same instant, my heart will be filled with an unspeakable, holy joy. I am no longer the same! By the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, I've been forgiven of the countless sins I've committed.

"Blessed is the man," David wrote, "whose sin the LORD does not count against him" (Psalm 32:2).

This truth echoes through my soul, resonating in places far deeper than any drug can go.

Many people today try to run from the past. I suppose I could try to as well, by leaving the hometown that holds so many reminders of my sinfulness. But I consider living here a gift from God. The regular reminders of my past are precious to me.

Why? Because, like Paul, I never want to forget the great mercy shown me.

### **We All Need This**

If you're a Christian, you don't need to live in the same place all your life to remember who you once were. And you don't need a background in drugs, or any other dramatic conversion experience, for the cross to be dear to you.

Regardless of our pasts, we've all sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). My nine-year-old son Chad's life is very different from mine. He's being raised in a Christian home. He has

## **8. I Will Glory in My Redeemer**

**Verse 1** I will glory in my Redeemer, whose priceless blood has ransomed me. Mine was the sin that drove the bitter nails, and hung Him on that judgment tree. I will glory in my Redeemer, who crushed the power of sin and death. My only Savior before the Holy Judge: The Lamb who is my righteousness.

**Verse 2** I will glory in my Redeemer. My life He bought, my love He owns. I have no longings for another, I'm satisfied in Him alone. I will glory in my Redeemer, His faithfulness my standing place. Though foes are mighty and rush upon me, my feet are firm, held by His grace.

**Verse 3** I will glory in my Redeemer, who carries me on eagle's wings. He crowns my life with lovingkindness, His triumph song I'll ever sing. I will glory in my Redeemer, who waits for me at gates of gold. And when He calls me it will be paradise, His face forever to behold.

Steve & Vikki Cook © 2001 Sovereign Grace  
Worship (ASCAP)

Song also recorded on *No Greater Love*

## 9. Only in the Cross

**Verse 1** When I look upon the cross, in that spectacle of suffering I see the power of God. There the Son of God was crushed and lifted up to die for me, and conquered death forever.

**Chorus** So I will glory only in the cross. Yes, I will glory only in the cross. And I will make my boast in the Lord Jesus Christ—crucified to ransom us.

**Verse 2** When I look upon the cross, in what might seem a senseless death I see the wisdom of God. For there the sinless Holy One was made to be sin for me, then He declared me righteous.

Mark Altrogge © 1991 Sovereign Grace Praise (BMI) / Dayspring Music (a div. of Word, Inc.) (Admin. by Word, Inc.)

been taught God's Word. And unlike his father, he is surrounded by people in a local church who respect godliness and humility, not worldliness and pride.

But as Chad enters young adulthood, the most important thing I can teach him is that, even though he's being raised in a Christian family and is leading a moral life, he's a sinner who desperately needs the substitutionary death of Christ to be forgiven by God.

And so I'm teaching him the gospel, day by day. I tell him that he's a sinner just like his dad, and that sin is a serious problem. I put it in words that his young mind can understand, but I don't ignore or minimize the seriousness of sin. Through his actions and attitudes he has rebelled against his Maker. And this great God is perfectly holy and must respond with fierce opposition to sin. He must punish it.

Some might find it surprising that I would teach a nine-year-old about God's wrath toward sin. But I find it surprising that any

loving person would withhold this truth from another person they love. Because only when we understand God's wrath toward sin can we realize that we need to be saved from it. Only when we hear the very bad news that we're deserving of judgment can we appreciate the very good news that God has provided salvation through His Son.

And this is what I hold out to my young son as the hope of his life: that Jesus, God's perfect, righteous Son, died in his place for his sins. Jesus took all the punishment; Jesus received all the wrath as He hung on the cross, so people like Chad and his sinful daddy could be completely forgiven.

### **The Only Essential Message**

I hope to teach my son many other things as well, but the gospel is the one essential thing for him to know.

"The gospel," writes Jerry Bridges, "is not only the most important message in all of history; it is the *only* essential message in

## **10. Glory To**

**Verse 1** Father, we love Your sovereignty. We love that Your wondrous grace ordered Calvary. Father, You gave Your only Son. You planned for His sacrifice before time had begun. Hallelujah, we lift up our hands. We lift up our voice.

**Chorus** Glory to the Father, glory to the Savior. You called us through the gospel of Your grace. Glory to the Father, glory to the Savior. Forever You are worthy of our praise, of our praise.

**Verse 2** Jesus, we love You for the cross. We love that You offered up Your life to purchase us. Jesus, we love Your saving death. We love that it rescues us from the Father's wrath. Hallelujah, we lift up our hands. We lift up our voice.

Doug Plank © 2003 Sovereign Grace Worship  
(ASCAP)

## 11. I Come by the Blood

**Verse 1** You are the perfect and righteous God whose presence bears no sin. You bid me come to Your holy place—how can I enter in, when Your presence bears no sin? Through Him who poured out His life for me, the atoning Lamb of God. Through Him and His work alone, I boldly come.

**Chorus** I come by the blood, I come by the cross, where Your mercy flows from hands pierced for me. For I dare not stand on my righteousness. My every hope rests on what Christ has done, and I come by the blood.

**Verse 2** You are the high and exalted King, the One the angels fear. So far above me in every way, Lord, how can I draw near to the One the angels fear? Through Him who laid down His life for me, and ascended to Your side. Through Him, through Jesus alone, I boldly come.

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all of history. Yet we allow thousands of professing Christians to live their entire lives without clearly understanding it and experiencing the joy of living by it.”<sup>2</sup>

Author John Stott agrees. “All around us we see Christians and churches relaxing their grasp on the gospel, fumbling it, and in danger of letting it drop from their hands altogether.”<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes the most obvious truths are the ones we need to be reminded of the most.

George Orwell once noted that “sometimes the first duty of intelligent men is the restatement of the obvious.”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the purpose of this book is to restate the obvious, yet oft-neglected, truth of the gospel, to bring it before you one more time.

On the other hand, maybe you’re thinking, “I already know this truth—I’ve known it for years.” That’s good, but let me ask you this: Is your life cross centered?

The symptoms that arise from *not* being cross centered are easy to spot. Do any of these describe you?

- You often lack joy.
- You're not consistently growing in spiritual maturity.
- Your love for God lacks passion.
- You're always looking for some new technique, some "new truth" or new experience that will pull all the pieces of your faith together.

If you can relate to any of these symptoms, let me encourage you...As you learn to live a cross centered life, you'll learn:

- How to break free from joy-robbing, legalistic thinking and living
- How to leave behind the crippling effects of guilt and condemnation
- How to stop basing your faith on your emotions and circumstances
- How to grow in gratefulness, joy, and holiness

## 12. Before the Cross

**Verse 1** My Savior's sacrifice paid for all my sin, so in my suffering I look to the cross again. No need, no want, no trial, no pain can compare to this: The wrath of God, once meant for me, was all spent on Him.

**Chorus** Before the cross, I humbly bow. I place my trust in the Savior. Your finished work captures my gaze. You bore the wrath, I know the grace.

**Verse 2** In my darkest hour, Your presence is my peace. In my days of joy, Your grace carries me. Jesus, my Great High Priest, the One who pleads for me, my heart is filled with faith in You, here at Calvary on my knees.

Jon Payne © 2003 Sovereign Grace Worship (ASCAP)

### 13. Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed

**Verse 1** Alas, and did my Savior bleed, and did my Sovereign die? Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I? Was it for sins that I had done He groaned upon the tree? Amazing pity, grace unknown, and love beyond degree.

**Chorus** My God, why would You shed Your blood, so pure and undefiled, to make a sinful one like me Your chosen precious child?

**Verse 2** Well might the sun in darkness hide and shut his glories in, when Christ, the mighty Maker, died for man, the creature's sin. Thus might I hide my blushing face while His dear cross appears, dissolve my heart in thankfulness, and melt my eyes to tears.

Words, Isaac Watts (1674–1748) / Music and new and alternate lyrics, Bob Kauflin © 1997 Sovereign Grace Praise (BMI)

Song also recorded on *Love Beyond Degree*

These aren't the overhyped promises of an author wanting to convince you to read his book. These are God's promises to all who respond to His wonderful plan of salvation.

Too many of us have moved on from that glorious plan. In our never-ending desire to move forward and make sure that everything we do, say, and think is relevant to modern living, too many of us have stopped concentrating on the wonders of Jesus crucified.

Too many of us have fumbled the most important truth of the Bible, and therefore we've suffered the consequences.

But it's not too late to change. It's not too late to restate and reestablish the obvious truth as the *most important truth in your life*.

The message that Paul had for Timothy is the same message God has for you. You need to rediscover the truth that first saved you. The key to joy, to growth, to passion isn't hiding from you. It's right before your eyes.

It's the gospel.



## Notes

**1** D.A. Carson, *The Cross & Christian Ministry: An Exposition of Passages from 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1993), 38.

**2** Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace* (Colorado Springs, Col.: NavPress, 1994), 46.

**3** John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 22.

**4** This bit of wisdom appears in many places; recently, it was quoted by U.S. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett, in an address to the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., 17 March 1985.

## 14. Before the Throne of God Above

**Verse 1** Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea: a great High Priest whose name is Love, who ever lives and pleads for me. My name is graven on His hands. My name is written on His heart. I know that while in heaven He stands, no tongue can bid me thence depart.

**Verse 2** When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see Him there, who made an end of all my sin. Because the sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free. For God, the Just, is satisfied to look on Him and pardon me.

**Verse 3** Behold Him there, the risen Lamb! My perfect, spotless righteousness. The great unchangeable I AM. The King of Glory and of Grace. One with Himself, I cannot die. My soul is purchased by His blood. My life is hid with Christ on high, with Christ, my Savior and my God.

Words, Charitie Lees Bancroft (1841–1892) / Music, Vikki Cook © 1997 Sovereign Grace Worship (ASCAP)

Song also recorded on *Depth of Mercy*

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**C.J. Mahaney** leads Sovereign Grace Ministries in its mission to establish and support local churches with the gospel, for the glory of God. He pastored Covenant Life Church (Gaithersburg, MD) for 27 years before handing that role to Joshua Harris in order to devote his full attention to Sovereign Grace. He is a council member of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, and serves on the boards of the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation and the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. C.J.'s books include *Humility: True Greatness*; *Living the Cross-Centered Life*; and *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God: What Every Christian Husband Needs to Know*. C.J. also edited or coauthored four books in Sovereign Grace Ministries' Pursuit of Godliness book series.

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