

WELCOME TO ANIMATE!

This Facilitator Guide will help you make the most out of the videos and the Journal. As you prepare to dive into this session, keep these things in mind:

- You know your group best. Adjust the activities as needed based on the interests, questions, and background of group members.
- Get ready for creativity. The Journal is meant to be a right brain experience. Think of the animate experience as a journey through the content with many stopping points based on the questions, wonderings, and interests of the group.
- You don't have to know everything. As a facilitator, you don't have to be the expert, or even agree with everything the speakers say. Be ready to spark conversation and see where this takes the group as you explore these ideas together.
- Social media can help. Think of ways to use social media and other online tools to keep the conversation going. How about a Facebook group, a Twitter hashtag, or posts on Instagram or Pinterest?

SESSION FLOW IDEAS

To get each session started, try this structure:

- Recap previous animate sessions or other learning experiences.
- Update the group on any between-session reflections or research.
- Explore the content on the first Journal spread.
- View the video.
- Dive into the rest of the Journal content together.

SESSION TITLES

- GOD | FAITH IS A QUEST
- RELIGION | SPIRITUALITY IS NOT ENOUGH
- JESUS | THE REVOLUTION OF LOVE
- SALVATION | ABUNDANT LIFE NOW
- CROSS | WHERE GOD IS
- BIBLE | A BOOK LIKE NO OTHER
- CHURCH | AN IMPERFECT FAMILY

ICON WATCH

Look for these icons that guide you in activities.

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— GROUP ACTIVITIES WITH QUESTIONS DESIGNED TO HELP ANIMATE CONVERSATION.

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— INTRODUCTORY AND OUT-GOING THOUGHTS TO SET-UP THE SESSION AND TO KEEP INTERACTIONS GOING BETWEEN SESSIONS.

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— LEADER TIPS: IDEAS TO HELP FACILITATORS FACILITATE.

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— FACTOIDS: INFORMATIONAL TIDBITS TO SPICE UP THE CONVERSATION.

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— QUOTES FROM THE VIDEO AND ELSEWHERE TO GET FOLKS THINKING.

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— FOOTNOTES: EXTRA BACKGROUND MATERIAL TO MAKE YOU SOUND EVEN SMARTER.



FOR BEST RESULTS

- Reproduce the Facilitator Guide in landscape format on 11x17 paper.
- Reproduce the Journal pages in landscape format on 8.5x11 paper.
- For both resources, use a color copier.

CROSS | WHERE GOD IS
NADIA BOLZ-WEBER

WHAT IS IT ABOUT US THAT MAKES US ALWAYS CHOOSE
THE BEDAZZLED CROSS AND NOT THE ACTUAL ONE?

In the last session, Shane Hipps introduced some different ways to think about salvation. Now, Nadia offers her take on the cross and how we might make sense of what was accomplished by the crucifixion of Jesus. Nadia asks us to think about how our interpretation of the cross lines up with our understanding of God.

MAKE THIS WEEK’S TOPIC—THE CROSS—obvious. Fill the meeting space with a variety of crosses. Announce BYOC (Bring Your Own Cross) by texting or emailing the group ahead of time. Have songs about the cross playing as people arrive. Ideas include, “By the Marks” by Gillian Welch, “The Beautiful, Terrible Cross” by Selah, or the traditional hymn “Lift High the Cross.”

You'll see in the video that Nadia talks about lots of different crosses—the cross Jesus died on, the ornate crosses the church created, and everything in between. She asks a tough question: “How [did] an instrument of death and torture in the Roman Empire . . . have anything to do with a loving God?”

- Talk about images of the cross with your group.
- What comes to mind when you think about the cross? Images? Music? Feelings? Situations?
- What are some unusual places you've seen a cross?
- Read Nadia's quote to the group. Reactions? Perhaps the truly unusual place is a cheap jewelry rack in a discount store!

To get to know who Nadia is, follow the tats. She has images of the cross and Luther's Latin phrase *simul justus et peccator*, which means “simultaneously righteous and a sinner.” Nadia's church is called “House of All Saints and Sinners.” Notice a pattern?

- How do Nadia's tattoo images relate to each other?
- If you were going to get a tattoo representing your belief about the cross, what would it look like? Sketch it in your Journal.
- Why might someone start a church called “House of All Saints and Sinners”?
- If you could start a church, what would you call it and why?



NADIA CHALLENGES TWO VIEWS OF THE cross that are central to many Christians' faith. This may fly in the face of your beliefs or the beliefs of your group members. If objections arise, direct the conversation toward healthy debate. Asking questions, disagreeing, and looking for answers are central to journeying in faith.

Read Romans 6:1-14 together.

This passage connects the cross with baptism. Martin Luther said, “The Old Adam in each of us is a pretty strong swimmer and is not easily drowned in the waters of baptism.” What does this mean? Our sinfulness is with us our whole lives. Being baptized doesn't make us sin-free. Encourage group members to write this quote in their Journals. Talk about the quote together.

- When have you felt like Old Adam or Eve was sitting in the Devil's place on your shoulder?
- Draw a chart, graph, or sketch representing the levels of sinner and saint you see within yourself.

“I CAME TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH BY A TWISTED ROAD . . . IT TOOK ME TEN YEARS, A NAGGING CHEMICAL ABUSE PROBLEM, AND A CUTE NEW LUTHERAN BOYFRIEND FOR ME TO COME BACK TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.” —NADIA BOLZ-WEBER

LUTHER MENTIONED THE PHRASE “SIMUL JUSTUS ET PECCATOR” AS EARLY AS 1515, TWO YEARS BEFORE HE POSTED THE 95 THESES. SEVERAL YEARS LATER IN A TREATISE OF 1521 CALLED “AGAINST LATOMUS,” HE DEVELOPED THE CONCEPT BY ARGUING THAT WE ARE NOT JUSTIFIED BY OUR “INNER RIGHTEOUSNESS” BUT BY CHRIST’S RIGHTEOUSNESS. LUTHER BELIEVED THAT OUR SINFULNESS REMAINS WITH US THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES.

Chapter 7 of Paul's letter to the Romans played big with Luther, especially Romans 7:19: “The good that I wish I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.” Interpreters continue to debate whether Paul was portraying himself as a Christian (Luther's view) or speaking the frustration of someone who has not yet embraced Christ or received God's Spirit (John Wesley's view).

“In 1517 in the little university town of Wittenberg, Germany, a Roman Catholic Monk named Martin Luther proposed ninety-five statements for debate about the Christian faith.” Rolf Jacobson goes on to assert in *Crazy Talk: A Not So Stuffey Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Books, 2008) that by doing so Martin Luther started “a revolution in Christianity” that is “still happening.”

Watch the video together.

Leave a couple quiet minutes after it ends for the group to write or sketch in the Journal, or just think. Then talk together about Nadia's point of view.

- What three pictures of God does Nadia paint?
- Which picture of God do you most relate to?
- Have you always thought of God that way or did you used to view God differently? How so?
- How is thinking of "God on the cross" different from thinking of "God above the cross"?
 - How does seeing God in the cradle and on the cross communicate to you who God is?

Check out these representations of the cross:

Legend has it that the night before the Battle of Milvian Bridge in October of the year 312 C.E., Constantine was commanded in a dream to “delineate the heavenly sign on the shields of his soldiers.” (Lactantius, On the Deaths of the Persecutors 44.5) The “heavenly sign” was a staurogram—the Latin cross. Constantine won the battle and sole reign over the Roman Empire, becoming its first Christian emperor.

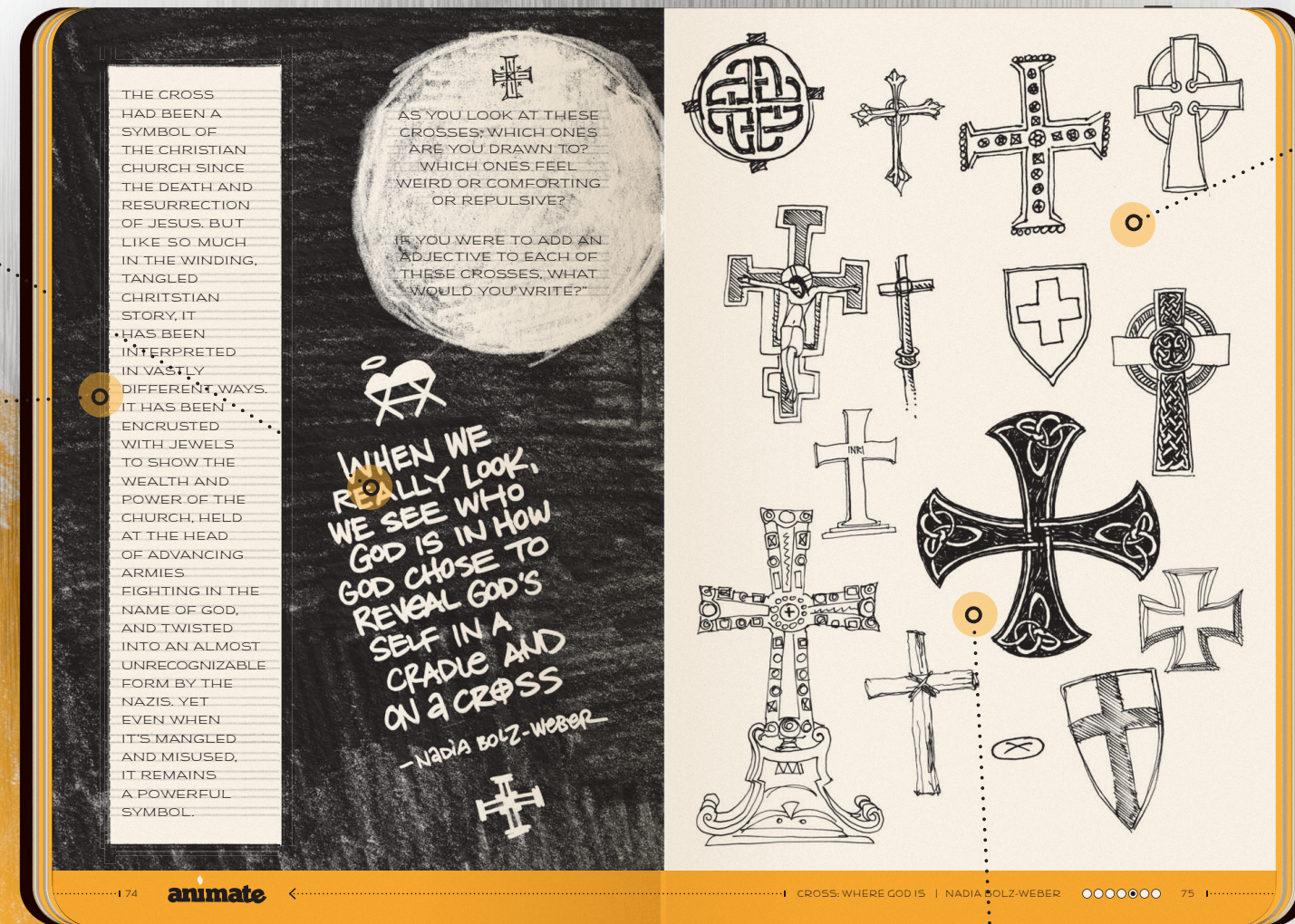
The Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live; but Christ lives in me." St. Francis of Assisi physically experienced that co-crucifixion Paul pictured. In 1224, during a time of fasting, he experienced the physical signs of the cross (stigmata) being pierced through his wrists and feet.

In 1915, Thomas Dixon's novel, *Birth of a Nation*, described a burning cross as summons to an errand of life and death. The same year, a Jewish man named Leo Frank was lynched in Marietta, Georgia. Two months later, the lynch mob burned a cross in celebration. Not long after that, William Simmons burned a cross on a mountaintop to signal the beginning of the Ku Klux Klan.

The swastika did not start as a variation on the cross. It began as a Sanskrit symbol meaning "to be good." It appealed to German nationalists in the late 1800s because of Aryan associations. Even American soldiers wore it during WWI. Then Hitler's use of it for anti-Semitic purposes of the Nazi Party changed everything.

Divvy these up among your group and have them respond to each representation of the cross. Take some time to discuss:

- What are some other representations of the cross you've seen?
How have they affected how you felt about who God is?
- If the cross was used to represent you, what would it mean?
 - How do you work to live "in the name of Christ"?



Look at the variety of crosses in the Journal and in the room. Take a tour of your church building or ask group members to recall what crosses they've seen in the church. As a group, assign an adjective to each cross. It's OK to be off the wall. For example, the pastel colored resin cross could be "morbid," given its placement in the church nursery.

- How did you decide which adjective to give each cross?

- What does it mean when someone wears or displays a cross?
- Picture a rap star wearing a big, gold, bejeweled cross on a necklace. Then picture a cross made out of sticks like a camp counselor might wear. Write down two impressions you would have of each person. How did their cross affect how you felt? Which one seemed "right" to you?

"THE IRONY, OF COURSE, IS THAT JUST A COUPLE CENTURIES INTO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, THE CHURCH ALIGNED ITSELF WITH EMPIRE RATHER THAN OPPOSING IT, AND WE BEGAN TO RESEMBLE THE VERY FORCES THAT REJECTED CHRIST IN THE FIRST PLACE. AND THIS WOULD ALSO BE THE POINT IN HISTORY WHEN WE ENCRUSTED CROSSES WITH GOLD AND JEWELS AS IF WE'RE TRYING TO MASK THE FOOLISHNESS OF A GOD WHO SUFFERS AND DIES."
—NADIA BOLZ-WEBER

THE CROSSES ON THIS PAGE ALL HAVE BAGGAGE.

Some good, some bad, most both. From Celtic cross to crucifix, from Iron Cross to the cross pressed into communion wafers, these images say more about us than they do about God. Nadia is intentionally deconstructing this symbol. However, be mindful that symbols have power, as do the ideas they convey. Group members may take issue with Nadia—that's OK. Remember the goal is not total agreement but animated conversation.

What's the cross without the crucifixion of Jesus? As a group, read through Jesus' crucifixion in one or more of the Gospels. You can find the story in Mark 15:33-39, Matthew 27:45-56, Luke 23:26-49, and John 19:18-30. If possible, consider showing a clip from a film such as *Jesus of Nazareth* or *Jesus* (the Campus Crusade for Christ film). Ask the group to share their reactions to these crucifixion scenes.

- GUSTAV AULEN (1879-1977) REINTRODUCED THE "CHRISTUS VICTOR" THEORY OF ATONEMENT TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY IN HIS BOOK OF THAT TITLE, PUBLISHED IN 1921. HE ARGUED THAT CV HAD DOMINATED CHRISTIAN THOUGHT FOR ITS FIRST 1,000 YEARS AND OUGHT TO BE RECLAIMED.
- ORIGEN OF ALEXANDRIA WAS ONE OF THE MOST BRILLIANT EARLY CHRISTIANS, ABLE TO HOLD HIS OWN WITH THE HEAVYWEIGHT MINDS OF ALEXANDRIA. HE SPELLS OUT HIS RANSOM THEORY IN *AGAINST CELSUS* 7.17. CHRIST GIVES HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM TO THE DEVIL, WHO HAS HELD HUMANITY CAPTIVE SINCE ADAM AND EVE'S FALL.
- GREGORY OF NYSSA (335-395) WAS AMONG THE "CAPPADOCIAN FATHERS" OF THE CHURCH (PRESENT-DAY TURKEY). HE ARGUED THE THEORY THAT LATER BECAME KNOWN AS "CHRISTUS VICTOR" IN HIS CATECHETICAL ORATIONS.
- PETER ABELARD (1079-1142) TAUGHT THAT CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED ATONEMENT THROUGH HIS MORAL INFLUENCE ON HUMANITY. ABELARD'S EMPHASIS ON THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS WIDENS OUR FOCUS FROM THE CROSS ALONE TO ALL THE OTHER WAYS THAT JESUS LIVED OUT LOVE FOR THE WORLD. THE CROSS IS THE CULMINATION OF A LIFE LIVED FOR OTHERS.



- ANSELM OF CANTERBURY (1033-1109) INTRODUCED THE THEORY OF SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT IN HIS *CUR DEUS HOMO*. HE PICTURES HUMANITY OWING GOD A HUGE DEBT OF HONOR BECAUSE WE HAVE FAILED TO WORSHIP AND LIVE IN THE LIGHT OF GOD. CHRIST'S DEATH PAYS THE DEBT.
- RENE GIRARD (1932-PRESENT) SEES THE DEATH OF JESUS AS A REVERSAL OF THE HUMAN PRACTICE OF SCAPEGOATING IN ORDER TO DIFFUSE THE PRESSURE OF RIVALRY. JESUS WILLINGLY BECAME THE SCAPEGOAT AND SO REVERSED THE CYCLE.
- IRENEAUS (CA 200) WAS THE BISHOP OF WHAT IS NOW LYONS, FRANCE. FOR IRENEAUS THE CROSS WAS THE CULMINATION OF A PROCESS BY WHICH GOD REDEEMED A CORRUPTED RELATIONSHIP WITH HUMANITY. GOD, IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST, TRANSFUSED DIVINE LIFE INTO EVERY STAGE OF HUMAN EXISTENCE—FROM BIRTH TO DEATH.

THERE ARE FOUR MAIN VIEWS of the cross (atonement theories) presented in this spread. In some ways Nadia's views are in line with these theories, but in other ways her ideas create some tension. Before class, think about where Nadia's views fit in with these four categories so you can better help your group do the same.

Talk through the four ideas on this spread together. Then review Nadia's three images of God as represented through the cross: Angry Daddy, Accountant, and God-on-the-Cross. Work together to decide where these three ideas best fit on the diagram in the Journal. Write each idea in the appropriate place. Talk together.

- How do Nadia's ideas about the cross fit in or go against these four main ideas?
- How do you think Nadia's journey back to Christianity affected her view of the cross?
- How does your journey affect how you see the cross?
- Do you think there's a right answer? Why or why not?
- Which view or views of the cross most align with your view? Mark them in your Journal using symbols, lines, or whatever best represents your beliefs.

"[IT'S LIKE GOD SAID], 'HERE'S THE EXTENT I WILL GO TO DEFY YOUR IDEA OF ME AS A VENGEFUL GOD: I WON'T EVEN LIFT A FINGER TO CONDEMN THE PEOPLE WHO HUNG ME... I WOULD RATHER DIE THAN BE IN THE SIN-ACCOUNTING BUSINESS ANYMORE.'" —NADIA BOLZ-WEBER

Compare this quote to the Psalm 51—a text that is assigned to be read on Ash Wednesday.

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“JESUS HAD TO DIE BECAUSE HIS DAD WAS MAD AT US. IN THIS WAY OF THINKING, WE’RE BORN BAD AND CAN’T BE 100% GOOD BUT SHOULD TRY REALLY HARD ANYWAY AND THEN FEEL GUILTY FOR OUR INEVITABLE FAILURES, SINCE OUR FAILURES ARE THE REASON JESUS HAD TO DIE . . . JESUS IS SORT OF A SUPPORTING CHARACTER IN THIS ABUSIVE DRAMA BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANITY.”

—NADIA BOLZ WEBER

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Nadia argues against the “Angry Daddy” view of God that requires Jesus to die on the cross so God won’t take out God’s wrath on the rest of us. Throw this idea out to the group: is God ever angry? Have group members make a list in their Journals of things that might/do/should anger God. Talk about it.

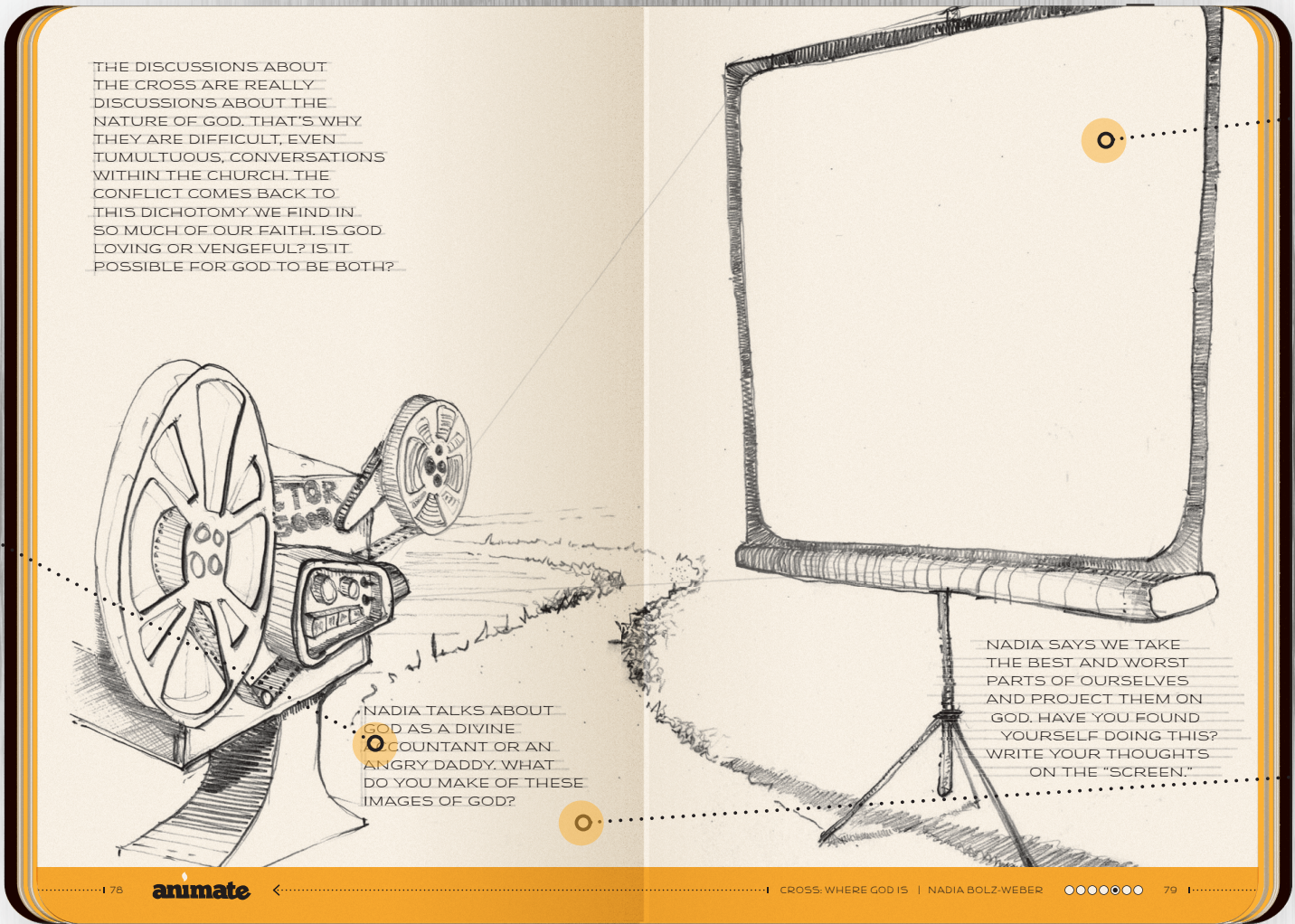
- How do you think God feels about things like the holocaust, genocide, exploitation, and slavery?
- What is the difference between God’s anger at these kinds of injustices and God’s enduring anger at each individual (that would require Jesus to be punished in humanity’s place)?
 - What do you think is the relationship between love and anger in God?

IN ROMANS 1:18, PAUL TALKS ABOUT HOW “THE WRATH OF GOD” HAS BEEN REVEALED AGAINST HUMAN UNGODLINESS AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS THAT SUPPRESSES TRUTH. GOD’S ANGER IS THEN A RESPONSE TO MISREPRESENTATION!

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“THE CROSS IS LIKE A LEGAL TRANSACTION BETWEEN US AND GOD. THINK OF A HEAVENLY LEDGER WHERE IT TRACKS ALL THE TIMES WE’RE BAD AND THEN PUTS A DOLLAR AMOUNT NEXT TO THEM. AND THEN THE FINAL COLUMN IS HOW MUCH WE OWE GOD ONCE ALL THESE SINS ARE TALLIED. WELL, THE TOTAL IN THE FINAL COLUMN IS JUST WAY TOO BIG FOR US TO EVER PAY IT OFF. . . . AND, WELL, SOMEONE’S GOT TO PAY IT OFF . . . THE ONE GUY WHO NEVER ADDED TO THE TALLY BECAUSE HE DIDN’T SIN.” —NADIA BOLZ-WEBER

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THE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE CROSS ARE REALLY DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE NATURE OF GOD. THAT’S WHY THEY ARE DIFFICULT, EVEN TUMULTUOUS, CONVERSATIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH. THE CONFLICT COMES BACK TO THIS DICHOTOMY WE FIND IN SO MUCH OF OUR FAITH. IS GOD LOVING OR VENGEFUL? IS IT POSSIBLE FOR GOD TO BE BOTH?

NADIA TALKS ABOUT GOD AS A DIVINE ACCOUNTANT OR AN ANGRY DADDY. WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THESE IMAGES OF GOD?

NADIA SAYS WE TAKE THE BEST AND WORST PARTS OF OURSELVES AND PROJECT THEM ON GOD. HAVE YOU FOUND YOURSELF DOING THIS? WRITE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE “SCREEN.”

As a group, brainstorm a list of events, beliefs, or actions that people have justified by their understanding of the Bible or Christian teachings. Write them around the projection screen in the Journal. Put a plus sign next to those that are positive and a minus sign next to those that are negative. Are all of these projections of humanity on God? Encourage members to think about this list as they write how they project themselves onto their idea of who God is this week.

Work together to rank some sins. Use dollar amounts or years of life or years of eternity. In the Journal, draw up a ledger that allows you to play out the heavenly accounting enterprise. Put a relative value on sin. Encourage the group to continue filling out their ledger this week and consider whether that process fits their sense of the character of God. Remind them to think about the flipside too—does NOT counting the debit of sin have any downsides? Why or why not?

The medieval church took this picture of a Divine Accountant to the extreme through the institution of indulgences. Acts of piety—prayers, acts of devotion, etc.—could each pay off a certain amount of debt. Even money could pay for sin. This is one of the parts of church life that drove Martin Luther to post his 95 Theses.



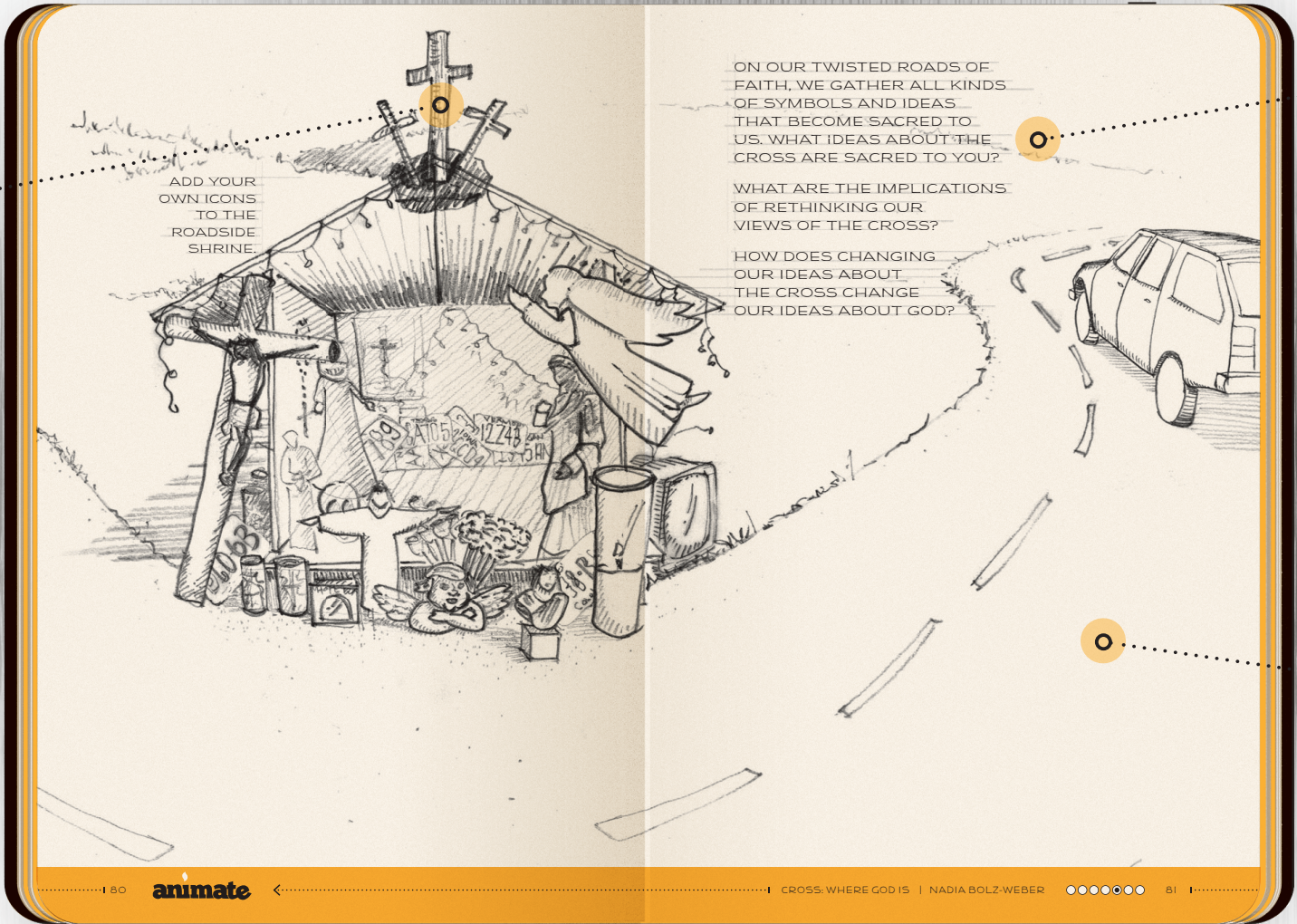
IN THE LAST SECTION OF HER TALK, Nadia moves from what God has done for humanity through the cross to what God can do through Christians because we resemble the cross. Here, you can help the group transition to talking about the cruciformational impact of the cross on Christians.

Whether around our necks, tattooed into our arms, on our altar, or in roadside shrines, the cross conveys a host of messages.

- Brainstorm as a group what might be different about the messages, given where diverse crosses are found.
- The real question is whether or not the message of the cross is enshrined in us. Divide up the group to read 1 Corinthians 1:18-21, 2 Corinthians 4:5-12, Galatians 2:15-21, Philippians 2:1-8, and Luke 9:18-26. Have them discuss and then share with the whole group what they believe their passage is saying about what it means to live a “cruciform” life.

“WHILE WE MIGHT BE SEEKING A CHRISTIANITY BASED IN GLORY AND TRIUMPH, JESUS IS SEEKING US IN THE PLACES HE’S ALWAYS BEEN FOUND. NAMELY IN HUMAN FRAILTY, IN HUMAN BROKENNESS, IN THE UNWASHED MASSES. HE’S WOING US IN SIMPLE TABLE FELLOWSHIP, AND CONTACT WITH THE UNCLEAN, AND CONFRONTING THE POWERS THAT BE. BECAUSE THE SHAPE OF CHRIST’S CHURCH IS ... DECIDEDLY CRUCIFORM.” —NADIA BOLZ-WEBER

CRU-CI-FORM. ADJ. SHAPED LIKE A CROSS; CRUCIATE.



Have the group write some significant life events along the road and draw some icons in the shrine in the Journal. Encourage them to reflect on their own “twisted road.” Then have them add some thoughts about how those events impacted their view of the cross or vice versa. Lead your group through the questions in the Journal and give them time to journal or discuss their answers.

THE NEW YORK TIMES HAS SPONSORED A LIVELY DEBATE ON THE TOPIC “SHOULD ROADSIDE MEMORIALS BE BANNED?” CHECK IT OUT AT: [HTTP://ROOMFORDEBATE.BLOGS.NYTIMES.COM/2009/07/12/SHOULD-ROADSIDE-MEMORIALS-BE-BANNED/](http://roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/should-roadside-memorials-be-banned/)

The next session of animate focuses in on the Bible. While the cross is a powerful symbol, its power is drawn from the Gospel—the good news conveyed by way of the Scriptures. The Bible fills out our understanding of the cruciform life with the story of God’s love for the world in Christ. Be sure to encourage the group to keep thinking, praying, and talking about the everyday significance of the cross by way of their interaction with the Journal and one another.

For further reading on the character of God in the cross, see the classic book by Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1993).

For a brief summary of each major theory of atonement, see Tony Jones’ ebook, *A Better Atonement*, (The JoPa Group, 2012).