

How the Cross of Jesus Can Give You a Whole New Lens on Life

I wear glasses. They're progressive lenses so the bifocal part has no line. That's cool for mid-range reading, like viewing a computer screen or picking cashews out of a mixed nut bowl. Sure, I can see basic stuff without wearing them but it's really limited. I miss important details, as in simply reading a document or looking at *anything* with real clarity. The lenses of my glasses bring life into a much sharper focus.

For me, Jesus is like that. His life and teachings bring my life into a much sharper focus. His presence in my daily living today also does that, that is, when I'm paying attention. But out of all the miracles and wise words and loving actions that are a part of who Jesus was (and is), the most important thing about Jesus is how he died and was raised back to life. This is the cornerstone of all Christian belief.

And we've got it all wrong.

Well, mostly. We've pictured God as upset and angry (lightning bolts). Then have turned Jesus' death into some sort of contract where a Wrathful Heavenly Judge is forced to buy into a mercy plea. Somehow, we reason, Jesus' death is supposed to change God's mind about us. When, in reality, His death is supposed to change *our* minds about God.

Jesus' death redefines what we think about God, and ultimately, about life itself.

God loves you unconditionally. Jesus did not retaliate against his executioners but loved them even to the death. Paul states that absolutely NOTHING can separate you from the love of God (Rom. 8:37-39). God always supports you toward a good and abundant life (John 10:10). Even when you are at your worst, God's love is at its best. Jesus is the friend who will never turn on you, abandon you, dismiss you.



Jesus intimately identifies with your pain. Whatever you are suffering – physically or mentally – Jesus enters into that brokenness with you as a companion and healer. On the cross, He absorbed all of our hurt: the harmful stuff we do and the harmful stuff the world does to us (Isaiah 53: 3-6, 2 Cor. 1: 5-7). The Cross reminds us that no matter how oppressive the darkness may seem, he is the Light that can never be extinguished. And, even when our pain spurs us to running away from Him, He pursues us (Luke 15). God never gives up on you. Never.

The Cross reminds us that New Life must always be preceded by the death of the old. The old controlling self must move aside to make room for God's expansive love. Our old ways of looking at others (and ourselves) must give way to God's new vision. We are invited to let go of our attachment a self-centered existence and allow Jesus to shepherd us into new, unknown landscapes (Psalm 23). Our protective ego cries, "Ooooo...risky business... Watch out!" Jesus submitted to the powerlessness of the Cross trusting that God would raise him up. Letting go is hard! But in releasing our control, we find a new freedom and a new friendship (2 Cor. 12: 9-10). Jesus said in so many ways, "The one who loses their life will find it!" The Cross beckons us to live into this Great Mystery in the details of our daily living.

The death of Jesus loudly proclaims, "God isn't who you think he is!" If we are hungry for living an awesome life, we will welcome the new perspective ushered in by the Cross. That perspective is guaranteed to disrupt and disturb your sense of how to live. And just as your world crumbles like an old chocolate chip cookie, God (surprise) appears and offers you an entire candy store! Who would've guessed?

The Way of the Cross begins with a single step or, well, like putting on your glasses.



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