

Profound Truths About the Power of the Cross From a 3-Year-Old

Deborah and I arrived back in Nashville this weekend after an Asia and Europe swing that brought us from Manila to Madrid and everywhere in between. Glad to be back in time to catch the end of the beautiful autumn weather and to spend some time with my favorite little people, Josephine and Liam.

Jo's parents have been reading her *The Jesus Storybook Bible* over the last few months, and it's been amazing to see her fall in love with the Bible and its cast of characters. For a while, all she wanted to read were stories about Jonah and Noah (presumably because of the boats and animals involved). However, at the moment, her nightly bedtime request is to read the story of Jesus on the cross. It's kind of difficult material to communicate to a 3-year old, but the author, Sally Lloyd-Jones, does an amazing job.

A few days ago, William (my oldest son) was reading the story of the crucifixion to Jo at bedtime, and she asked him this question:

"Daddy, why isn't Jesus wearing a shirt?" (Referring to a picture in her book of a shirtless Jesus on the cross.)

William: "Well, Jo, some mean people took Jesus' shirt from him and put him on the cross."

Jo: "We didn't take Jesus' shirt, did we?"

How do you answer this penetrating question from a 3-year-old?

Technically, the answer is no. None of us was alive in the first century, so none of us was involved in taking Jesus' shirt on Good Friday. But Josephine already knew that, and her

question was getting at something deeper.

Somehow, at 3, she already suspected her own complicity in the crucifixion. Somehow, she already knew the answer to the question she asked her dad.

Yes. We did take Jesus' shirt. Josephine did. Her dad did. I did. We are all complicit in Jesus' death—whether we live in the first century or the 21st century.

In the words of the hymn, "How Deep The Father's Love":

*Behold the man upon a cross/ My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice/ Call out among the
scoffers.*

*It was my sin that held Him there/ Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life/ I know that it is
finished.*

Whether we are 3 or 73, the most important reality we will have to confront in our lives is the fact that we took Jesus' shirt. We must all come to the realization, "It was my sin that held Him there."

But there's good news.

We didn't just take Jesus' shirt. He took it off and gave it to us. He became naked on the cross, so that we might be clothed with his righteousness.

Isaiah says it this way, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord ... for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa. 61:10).

As William tried to figure out how to answer Jo's question, she asked another question:

"We're Jesus' friends, right?"

“Yes.” William answered. “We’re His friends.”

As sinners, we’ve all taken Jesus’ shirt.

But only Jesus’ friends realize whose shirt they’ve taken.

Only Jesus’ friends realize that the naked man on the cross should have been them.

Only Jesus’ friends realize that we were once his enemies, but now we’re his friends—not because we didn’t take his shirt, but because by faith, we put it on. {eo}

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