

This Simple Question Is Key to Living the Life God Destined for You

You've seen a thousand crosses in your life, but what does the cross mean? What comes to mind when you look at one? Do you see just a piece of jewelry? Or do you think of an ancient form of torture? Perhaps, you see a religious icon: the identifying symbol of Christianity? What do you see when you look at a cross?

I believe the answer to this simple question is key to living life the way God destined. The right or wrong answer determines everything. We cannot afford to let the cross of Christ become yesterday's news. It must always remain today's headline.

It would be difficult to read the Bible and miss the centrality of the cross. I think someone would have to be intentional to miss it. The Old Testament points toward it, and the New Testament celebrates it. And the book of Revelation is a display of heaven's obsession with Jesus Christ's work on the Cross.

Paul expresses the New Testament's conviction that any boast of victory can only legitimately be "... in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. 6:14b). Moved by this truth, Dottie Rambo penned these powerful words:

"I boast not of works or tell of good deeds/
For naught have I done to merit His grace

All glory and praise shall rest upon Him/
So willing to die in my place

I will glory in the cross/
In the cross

Lest His suffering all be in vain/ I will weep no more for the cross that He bore

I will glory in the cross."

May I do some glorying [or bragging] for a few moments and tell you what I see when I see a cross?

God Hates Sin

First, I see how much God hates sin. Anyone who takes a good look at the death of Christ cannot believe that God takes a casual approach to sin. He hates it! It grieves Him deeply. Dean Harvey made this observation, "The cross is a one-time visual representation of God's grief over sin." Jesus came to earth to take our sin as His own and pay the penalty of sin on our behalf. Romans 8:32 says, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Notice the phrase, "did not spare." We find this phrase concerning the judgment of God toward the sin of Egypt (Ps. 78:50), Israel (Rom. 11:21), angels who sinned (2 Pet. 2:4), Noah's generation (2 Pet. 2:5) and then of Jesus. Jesus makes the list of those who suffered the wrath of God. Because of our sin, the full weight of judgment came upon Jesus.

God Loves Sinners

When I see the cross, I see how much God hates sin, but I also see how much He loves sinners. The sinless Savior took our sin and in mercy paid the awful price of justice (see 2 Cor. 5:21). He didn't do this because we were noble and good but simply because He loves us. "Rarely for a righteous man will one die. Yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:7-8). When Jesus says, "I love you," He means it. How do we know? Billy Graham expressed it beautifully, "God proved His love on the cross. When Christ hung, and bled, and died, it was God

saying to the world, "I love you." Never doubt His love for you. Every time you see a cross, see His love for the world and you as an individual.

Just One Way

When I see a cross, I see the only way to get to God and the future He has for me! In the era of modern plurality, the truth the apostles first proclaimed still stands. "There is no salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus' words still ring out, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). It is no secret that all have sinned, and Scripture teaches plainly that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the Holy Spirit says, "Such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, and you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus by the Spirit of our God." [See 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; see also Rom. 3:23]. Hallelujah! We are not who we were because of the cross. By His death, burial and resurrection, Jesus saves.

Life

Remember these words? "The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:1). When I see the cross, I see forgiveness, freedom, victory and life for all who embrace Jesus. The cross is the signpost pointing to the life God made available to all who call on the name of Jesus.

This is life beyond humanity. This is the life that makes the impossible possible. It is God's life in quantity and quality. It is both eternal and abundant. It is for the age to come and for the days we live in right now. In Jesus, I find my healing and restoration! In Christ, I discover real victory over self, sin and Satan. Wholeness is mine spiritually, emotionally,

mentally, physically, relationally, financially and in any other area you can name. Praise God! My sin is forgiven. The curse is broken. The enemy is defeated, and we are children of God through the work of Jesus.

What do you see when you see the cross? I hope you see these four truths and much more. The cross says it all. Jesus won. He finished it. Christ whipped the devil and death. He rose, ascended to the Father and sent back His very Spirit to dwell in us, teach us and empower us. The cross isn't yesterday's news for the believer; it is today's headline. {eo}

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