

"The mystery and the beauty of the world is overwhelmingly amazing, and there's no explanation of how it came about. I think it makes sense to believe in God, but exactly what decision in your life you make differently because of it, I don't know."

Bill Gates, in an interview with Rolling Stone magazine

Like most of those around us, Bill Gates has a sense of the Divine, but doesn't know how to respond to it. In our FAITH ENGAGE series through the summer, we will take one key doctrinal issue each week and try to simplify it as much as possible, citing key verses. Then we will suggest ways to make it understandable to our contemporaries that we might ENGAGE them with our FAITH.

If there was a book in print titled "How To Understand a Woman," it would need to be a lengthy volume indeed! And even the many pages could not fathom the depths of the issue.

Likewise, a book fully covering "The Death of Christ" would need to be a lengthy volume. Though it is a weighty topic, today we will attempt to simplify it that we might ENGAGE in meaningful conversation.

(The "simple" version)

DEATH = BLOOD = FORGIVENESS

Hebrews 9:22 ... and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

1. God makes the rules
2. No one can forgive sin but God
3. I need forgiveness
4. I can choose to obey his rules (or not)

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

1. FORETOLD THOUGHOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT

There is a "scarlet cord" through the Bible

- a. Animal sacrifice of Abel
- b. Abraham's sacrifice on Mt. Moriah
- c. Passover Lamb in Egypt
- d. Levitical sacrifices
- e. Offerings of Samuel, David, Elijah, etc.

2. PROMINENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- a. c. 1/50 verses in the N.T. speak of Christ's DEATH
- b. c. 1/5 of the Gospel accounts are about the last 3 days of Jesus' life (death & resurrection). If all the gospels wrote the entire life of Jesus with the detail of the last 3 days we would have a record approaching 1000 pages.

3. CHIEF PURPOSE FOR THE INCARNATION

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Hebrews 9:26b He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

1 John 3:5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

4. ESSENTIAL FOR OUR SALVATION

a. The Son must be lifted up (on the cross)

John 3:14-15 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

b. The grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die

John 12:23-24 The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

c. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins

Hebrews 9:22 ... and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

1 Peter 1:18-20 Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from our forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.

Let's now look at "death" from both the past perspective of Jesus' death on the cross and the present perspective of how a believer must identify with that death today.

Each of the two have a key passage from the book of Romans. And for each we will find 3 key concepts to help us simplify our understanding and communication.

CHRIST'S DEATH (Romans 5: 6-11)

1. A SUBSTITUTION (vicarious)

Christ died in your place

v. 6-8 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

2. A SATISFACTION (propitiation)

Christ's death satisfied God regarding your sin

v. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

3. A SALVATION (reconciliation)

Christ's death made a relationship with God possible

v. 10-11 For if while we were enemies of we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Now let's look at how we must process this death of Jesus to influence our life today. Many don't consider this aspect of His death. Even the devil believes that the death of Jesus was to save from sin, but that doesn't save him! So here are three steps to applying Jesus' death to my life today – all from Romans 6.

MY DEATH TO SELF (Romans 6:3-7)

1. An IMMERSION (baptism)

I fully immerse myself in Him

v. 3-4 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

2. An IDENTIFICATION (crucifixion)

I daily die to self, taking up my "cross"

v. 5-6a For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him.

3. An EMMANCIPATION (freedom)

I am freed from the power of sin

- v. 6b-7 Our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

We have concentrated on the PAST death of Jesus, and the PRESENT death of self in identifying with Jesus. But there is also a FUTURE aspect – my physical death. And each of the three frees me from a different aspect of SIN.

FREEDOM FROM SIN THROUGH DEATH

- 1. Christ's death freed me from
the PENALTY of sin**
- 2. My dying to self frees me from
the POWER of sin**
- 3. My physical death will free me from
the PRESENCE of sin**

Finally, let me suggest 3 questions that might be good conversation starters on the subject of Jesus' death. I think they are relatively non-threatening, and depending on the response, could lead to your sharing some of the points we have already mentioned today. Bottom line, may God lead the conversation to ask if your friend might want to pray with you to receive this Jesus who has died and risen for them.

Questions you could ask:

Why do you think Jesus died?

What do you think Jesus' death should mean to you?

How do you keep from doing the things that are wrong?