

## A Walk Through the Gospel: Exploring a Christian Worldview

### **The Cross**

**The Cross** is the central symbol of Christianity. You can see it everywhere: buildings, jewelry, tattoos. But what does it mean? It's a symbol of capital punishment. Why would people wear an "execution stake?" Followers of Jesus see the cross as a historical reference point for the **love and the justice** of God.

### **Created for Relationships**

The Christian worldview understands that God has created people for **relationships**. We believe we were created for four kinds of relationships: **with God, with self, with people, and with the stuff of earth.**

We believe God created as an expression of His **love**. Love requires relationship. God Himself is relational - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The communion of God makes it possible to say that God is love. However, if we are going to truly be empowered to love we must also have the capacity to choose. Love and **choice**. Think about it for a moment, how does a couple who had an arranged marriage actually get to loving each other?

Choice or the capacity to choose given by God to humans in His creation is represented by the **Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil** in the garden. The man and woman were told by God that there were hundreds of other trees and plants to eat from, but not to eat from this tree as a demonstration of their love and trust of God. If they were to eat of this tree, life would change and death would reign.

The Scripture tells us that Evil - Satan, entered into the garden and persuaded the man and woman that God was holding out on them and that the fruit would make them wise and powerful. They chose to eat the fruit.

### **Impacted by Brokenness**

Because the man and the woman ate the fruit, all our relationships changed. We can use the word **brokenness** to describe the change. Our relationships are infected by the change from innocence to guilt, from honour to shame, and from trust to fear. Now all cultures manage the fall-out of sin and the problem of being separated from God.

How do you experience or see brokenness in our world: **In relation to other people?** To the **stuff of earth?** To **self?** (Write out examples for each area.) The Christian worldview says that all this brokenness is the product of our broken relationship **with God.**

Sin is a condition of independence from God. It produces chaos and a quest for fulfillment. The stuff of earth, relationships with people, and our own achievement were never intended to bear the weight of our souls. The Scripture shows us how we continually use and abuse people, stuff, and ourselves.

Sin creates a **trajectory** for our lives as we come under God's judgment. Jesus described this consequence with the word **"Gehenna."** Sometimes translated as Hell it was the name for a valley, known today as the Valley of Hinnom, outside Jerusalem. This valley was the site of a terrible tragedy: the sacrifice of children to a false god in a fire. A prophet named Isaiah, said, all who walked through Gehenna were cursed. Without God's intervention we would remain separate from Him. The Bible also tells the story of Israel and the nations in order to show us how God prepared people for the time that He would rescue and redeem humanity from sin through Jesus and the Cross.

### **The Rescue of God**

Only God Himself could **rescue** us. The Christian worldview believes that because of God's love and mercy, He moved towards us and into our situation of brokenness. **Jesus** came from the communion of God and took on flesh (became human) in order that He could live in our relationships. He had a relationship with God-the Father, with people, with himself, and with the stuff of earth. The Bible gives an account of His life and He had amazing relationships.

With **people** Jesus was known as one who received the poor, the rich, the powerful and the weak. He elevated the place of women and children in His circles. He had a different relationship with **the stuff of earth**. He healed the sick, fed the thousands with a few loaves and a few fish; he went to a party where they ran out of wine, and he saved the host from embarrassment when he changed water to wine. He calmed the storms and he filled nets with fish.

With **himself**, Jesus was a stranger to self-hatred. In no place in the Scripture does Jesus seem to hate or condemn Himself. In fact the secret of Jesus' great relationships was that He lived loved. He knew **His Heavenly Father's** great love. When asked why he let the "untouchables" into His circle of friendship and by what authority He taught such wonderful things about God, Jesus answered that He knew who He was because He knew who He came from and who He was going back to. In other words, Jesus' sense of self was informed by His relationship with His Heavenly Father; He lived loved and He never sinned or lived independent of His Heavenly Father.

Yet, strangely, the **trajectory** of Jesus' life was the **cross**. The Christian account says that Jesus **died on the cross**, was **buried**, and that on the third day He was **raised from the dead to new life**. Without this account of the **resurrection**, the cross would just be a great political tragedy: innocent man executed on a cross, caught up in the political conflict between the Jewish and Roman leaders of Jerusalem. However, because of the Resurrection we have to look again at the cross and ask what was God doing there?

At the cross Jesus let all His relationships get trashed for our benefit. He now entered into our suffering completely. With **people** Jesus experienced the pain of betrayal by a friend, rejection by the crowds, and abandonment by his friends. At the cross Jesus experienced the pain of having His **body** torn and tortured, and the shame of having his garment gambled for by the soldiers before He ultimately died. On the way to the cross Jesus' sense of **self** was submitted to great psychological and physiological stress as He prayed in the garden, "Father if there is another way... But not my will but yours be done." When He got up he actually was sweating blood. That's stress! But the worst was yet to come. Before He died on the cross Jesus sensed the change in His experience of the **Father's Presence** and he cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" For the first time in eternity Jesus experienced our normal -- separation from His Heavenly Father.

So, what was happening when Jesus died on the cross? What did Jesus do here that brought about the rescue of humanity from the consequences of sin?

One of the Bible verses that helps us understand what was going on at the cross is **2 Corinthians 5:21**. It says, "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." (Take a blank paper and a written on paper.) Here's the book on my sin; its a terrible tale. Here's the book on Jesus's sin; its blank. At the Cross God made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin (transfer the written on page to Jesus) for us. As well He created the way for all of us who would be "in Him" to be the righteousness of God. (Transfer the blank page to us.) Righteousness is a fantastic word describing what its like to have all of our relationships in the right order--as if we had never sinned!

Christians believe then that the cross shows us the love and the justice of God. The cross shows us God moving toward us in love in order to do for us what we could never do for ourselves: satisfy the justice of God for the cost of sin. The death of the Innocent One satisfied the cost. We believe Jesus paid it all. We often forget that forgiveness actually costs the one doing the forgiving.

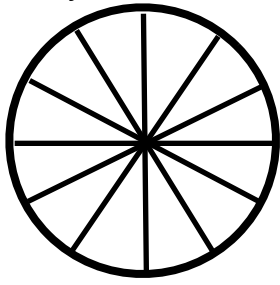
Let's say that you are driving to school to take an exam and that you are so distracted that you run the red light. You crash into my car. Bam! We get out, have a look, and you keep saying, "I'm so sorry; I ran the light, I'm so sorry." So I assess the damage to my car, listen to you, and I say, "I forgive you. Why don't you just go on your way. I forgive you." So... who pays?

Right. I pay. Even my insurance company will agree with you. They might ask, "Who hit you?" And I'll have to reply, "Hmmm I don't know, I forgave them." Then the company will say, "Well then, you pay!" And that's how forgiveness really works. Its not fair. But its love in motion and its just because someone will pay. Forgiveness requires that someone pay. So even when I'm offended by what someone says, and decide to forgive them, I pay; I pay by having to metabolize the pain and the shame inside myself. This person does not owe me nor are they obligated to me. Because of the Cross, Christians can affirm that Jesus has paid it all. When God decided to forgive humanity for sin, He knew He would have to pay.

### **New Life**

To live in the new life of Jesus is to see **life through the perspective of the Cross**. It is to receive Jesus' forgiveness for our sin as a free gift. He offers it to us **by grace** as an expression of His love toward us. Now living through the lens of the cross we see all our relationships differently -- **with God, with people, with self, and with the stuff of earth**. God loves me. I am loved. And because of that reality I am able to love others and to steward the stuff of earth differently in respect to God and people.

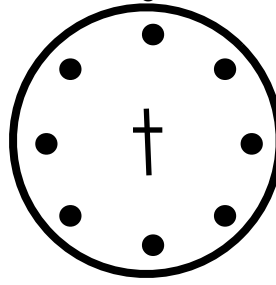
Naturally we live life like this:



### **Segmented Life (Pie)**

We are at the center deciding about all these items independent of God.

But now through Jesus we live life like this:



### **Integrated Life (Pie)**

Jesus is at the centre of our life and He is directing us into how to live in these relationships.

This change of loyalty from self to Jesus generates hope and a growing confidence of His love for us even when life around us is still broken. The early followers of Jesus used the phrase, "Jesus is Lord" to describe their change of loyalty. Now we believe Jesus is the King and now we are His citizens in His Kingdom forever. Now we are empowered to connect with God and to His purposes for our lives.

In order to receive the new life, forgiveness of sin, and this confidence of God's love, the Bible describes how we should respond to the good news or gospel of Jesus. A man named Paul, who spoke to people from many different nations and cultures about Jesus, said, "I have shared with both Jews and the people of all nations that they must have repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21)

Repentance is a word that means to change your mind towards God. When you have encountered the Truth, you can change your mind. Faith or belief, means to have a continual determination to act in response to Jesus as He leads you. Therefore, we use the word "disciple" to describe a person who is following Jesus. A disciple is a learner and a follower. Disciples have a personal relationship with Jesus and are being changed by Him. They have a new expectation of being like Jesus as they live.

Disciples are to be baptized in water as a response to Jesus. The confession of baptism is, "Jesus is Lord." Through baptism we tell the story of Jesus again: He lived, He died on the cross, He was buried, and He was raised to life. Now in baptism we share in His death and His life! Now in life we are on a Kingdom Mission to love God, to love people, and to share His message in a broken world.

### **The Gospel and You**

As you have listened to this Gospel talk today, what did you really like?

What did you find challenging?

Which "pie" describes the way you are living life now? The Segmented Pie or the Integrated Pie?

Would you like respond to this good news of God's love for you by receiving Jesus as Lord for the forgiveness of your sin?

You can be a disciple of Jesus. This is what God did for you by sending Jesus to die on the cross in your place. So that you would not forever live separate from Him in Hell, God sent his only Son, Jesus to die on the cross--suffering the punishment that justice demands. Then He rose from the grave, forever defeating death! The Bible tells us, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

If you will repent of your sins and put your trust in Jesus, God says He will forgive all your sins and grant you the gift of everlasting life because the payment for your sin was made by Jesus on the cross. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."

You can turn from your sins and trust Christ by faith through prayer right now. God knows your heart so the words of the prayer below are not magical but if they reflect the decision you would like to make you can use it to express your faith to God. Read the prayer now.

### **Prayer**

“Heavenly Father, I confess to you that I am am sinfully broken and that I am separated from you. Thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sins and show me that you love me. I want to turn from all my sins (name some) and I trust Jesus Christ to come into my life and take control of my life from now on. Please forgive me and grant me your gift of everlasting life. Please help me by Your Holy Spirit to follow you and to grow as your follower. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

Does this prayer show the desire of your heart? If so pray it out loud to God.

If you have truly repented and trusted Jesus there will be some changes in your life. You will experience a new desire to honour God, a deeper love for others and other changes. 1 John 5:13 says, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” If you surrendered your life to Christ this is the start of an exciting relationship with God and you can be sure He came in and will give you eternal life! You should take steps to grow in your new relationship with God. Next time we can look further at how to grow as a follower of Jesus.

Set a time to meet up and talk about “what next?” and “how to grow.”

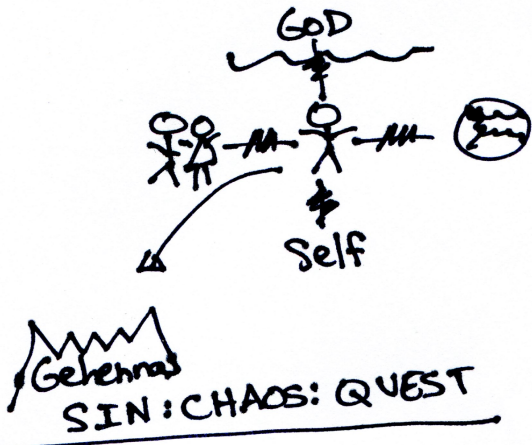
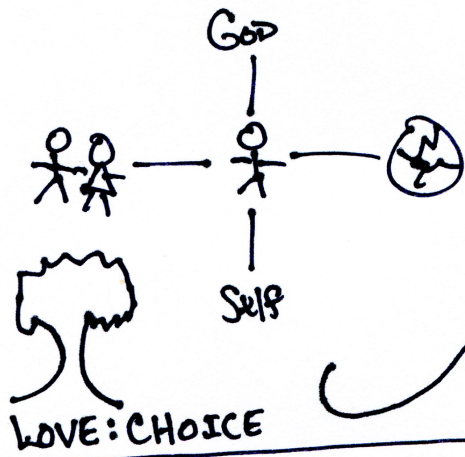
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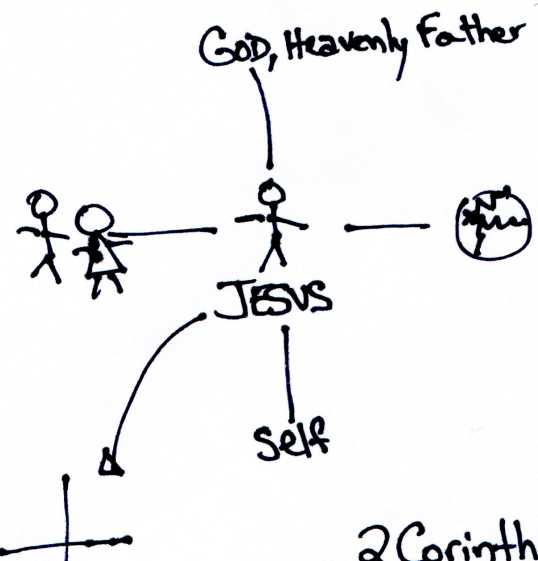
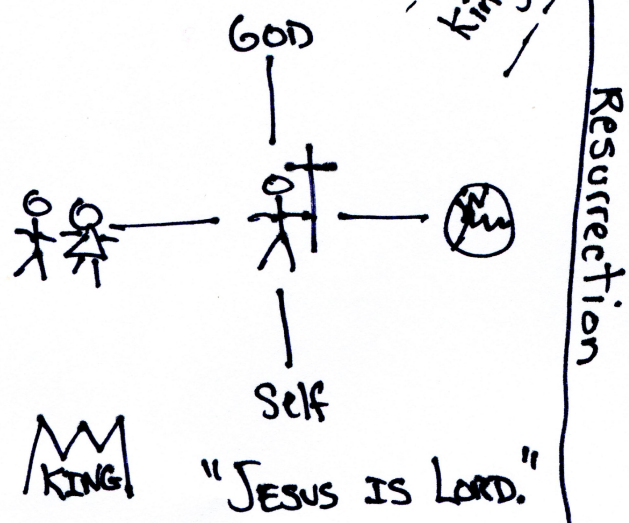
relationship

brokenness



new life  
by GRACE

rescue



- DISCIPLE: KINGDOM
- ① Repentance toward God
  - ② Faith in Jesus Christ
- ~ BAPTISM

2 Corinthians 5:21  
God made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

LOVE | JUSTICE