

What Does That Have To Do With Jesus Hanging On A Cross?

Joe Slater

Good question, don't you think? It puts the focus back where it belongs – on Jesus. People are inclined to concentrate on secondary matters: “I quit the church because . . . one of the elders offended me; or the preacher didn't visit me; or a member was unfriendly to me; or I didn't like the singing” (or any of a thousand other excuses). In each case, let me ask: What does that have to do with Jesus hanging on a cross dying for your sins?

Do we honestly think these pathetic excuses are going to stand up when we face Him in judgment? The church is the spiritual body of Christ! It's chock-full of imperfect members (just like you), but it's still the Lord's body. To abandon it is to abandon Him.

How will you reply when He looks at you and says, “Son (or daughter), I bore it all for you. People said nasty things about Me, argued with Me, hated Me, and tried several times to kill Me. I put up with it because I love you.

“They spat in My face, slapped Me, and beat Me with a scourge. I could have asked My Father to rescue me with legions of angels, but I didn't. I endured the abuse so you could be saved.

“They pounded nails through My hands and feet, then suspended me on a cross like the most vile criminal so that everyone could gawk at My nakedness and watch Me suffer and die. But that wasn't the worst of it. No, the worst part was when I took your sins upon Myself – yours and everyone else's. What a burden that was! But I did it because that was the only way you could have forgiveness.

“Now, tell me again – what was the reason you left Me?”

Brethren, hear me! I'm not upholding offensive elders, lazy preachers, unfriendly members, or poor singing. But when someone “quits the church” over any or all of these or similar things, he betrays the fact that he doesn't understand (or care) Who Jesus is or what He has done. He doesn't understand what the church is, or Whose it is. He doesn't understand the purpose of being a Christian.

Next time you hear an excuse such as we have discussed, or when you are tempted to use such an excuse yourself, just ask: “What does that have to do with Jesus hanging on a cross dying for your sins?”

x x x x x x x

“Processing” Bible Books

Some books are easily read and quickly forgotten (many novels, for example). Other books require careful reading, making notes of useful quotations and after reading, meditative consideration.

Phillip Slate, a friend, graduate professor, and well-read preacher, speaks of “processing” a book, an expressive reminder of how some books should be examined.

Good Bible study “processes” each Bible book. Processing means being able to state succinctly what the subject of the book is, and then to say what it primarily says about that subject. It also means memorizing an outline of the book or, in the case of an historical narrative or gospel, remembering one or two major incidents in each chapter.

Once you process a book, you know it thoroughly.

--Cecil May, Jr. (Montgomery, AL) via *Preacher Talk*

FOOD

First, food can be spiritually unhealthy. Adam and Eve ate and sinned. The prophet from Judah was enticed by the offer of a meal to disobey God and died for it (1 Kings 13). Sitting down to eat with a ruler can be dangerous (Proverbs 23:1-2). Gluttony is a shame, (Proverbs 28:7). It makes one lazy (Titus 1:2). Love feasts can hide deadly hidden reefs (Jude 12).

But food can be spiritually healthy as well. It refreshed Elijah (1 Kings 19:5-8). It helped disciples understand that Jesus had risen (Luke 24:30-31, 41-43). Multiplied food taught disciples to depend on the Lord for resources (Matthew 14:16-18). Sharing food among Christians from house to house had a good effect within and outside the church (Acts 2:46-47).

Brownies, coffee cake, and blueberry muffins may not be so healthy physically, but they can be spiritually healthy. (At least, the wife's coconut muffins are healthy in both.) We use them and other foods to share with non-Christians, break the ice, and show we are normal people. We often have people over for brunch where spiritually healthy conversations and relationships can develop.

Perhaps the most spiritually healthy food is the Lord's supper. God's people gather around the Lord's table every Sunday and remember, with profound spiritual benefit, that Jesus died for all and will come again to claim His own.

Food is a gift of God to be received with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:4-5). It can nourish not only the body, but the spirit, for lasting good.

--J. Randal Matheny (Brazil) via Bulletin Gold