

The Compass

a tool for disciplers



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

How Death Shows Love

The following illustration seeks to inject meaning into what is for many an empty phrase: “Jesus died to show that He loved us.” Almost everyone would agree with that, but few have thought through what the heck it means. With a simple guided conversation you can explain what it means and leave people faced with the unavoidable conclusion that they are in grave danger. Ultimately you are just walking them through a simple syllogism:

Jesus’ death shows He loves us.

Death only shows love when the beloved is in grave danger.

Therefore, we are in grave danger.

Most would grant the first premise with no argument at all. You can easily show them that they already know the second premise is true. If both premises are true (and they will likely agree), and the form of the argument is sound (it is), the conclusion must be accurate.

Here’s how it works:

Do you know why Jesus had to die? What was the point of His death?

[Don’t know, pay for our sins, show He loves us]

Growing up I always heard that Jesus died to show how much He loved us. Have you ever heard that?

The problem was I had no idea what it meant. I always wondered how does His death show love?

Let me try to flesh that out for you. Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend/mom?

Do you love her?

Let’s say you want to show her the full extent of your love so you go to visit her this weekend and you tell her, “I love you. But I want to show you how much.” Then you take out a gun, put it in your mouth, and blow your head apart. What is she thinking at this point?

[You’re a complete psycho.]

Yes, that doesn’t show love, it shows insanity. So rewrite the script. Give me a scenario in which you could die on purpose, but it would really show love for your girlfriend.

[She’s about to get hit by a car, you jump in the way push her to safety and get hit. There’s a bad guy, you fight him to rescue her and die in the process. Burning building, drowning in ocean, etc.]

We could come up with a hundred different scenarios, but the consistent thing in each of them would be that in each case in order for your death to show love, not insanity, your girlfriend would have to be in some sort of danger.

It seems that the principle is, that death only shows love when the beloved is in grave danger. Does that make sense?



So, let's get back to what was going on when Jesus died.

If death only shows love when the beloved is in grave danger, and Jesus death shows love, what must that mean about our predicament?

[We are in danger]

What are we in danger of? What was the train that he was jumping in front of?

[Sin, death, judgment from God, hell]

At this point you can transition to the whole gospel, or move on to another illustration. This whole thing also works well as a clarification for Romans 5:8 when going through *The Four Laws*.

End