

CLEAR VISION

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Soul Food: Dying to Live



By Rich Blue

Are you living or simply alive. Jesus said that he

came that we might have life and have it abundantly. What do you think Jesus had in mind for you when he spoke of living life abundantly? I don't think Jesus was thinking about money, possessions or fame; yet I don't think he intended to exclude those things either. I think he was talking about living lives of truth, meaning, purpose, power, courage, faith, passion, growth, and service. If in the process of living life abundantly, we experience fortune and fame, then bring it on!

In John chapter 11, Jesus was comforting Martha, the grieving sister of his deceased friend, Lazarus. He was telling her that her brother will rise from the dead and live again. Martha tells Jesus that she believes that Lazarus will ultimately be raised in the last days, but Jesus interrupts her. He wants her to understand that what

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25,26

he is talking about is not some event in the distant future. He is speaking of now. He is referring to what is happening in the here and now. He exclaims to her that **he** is the resurrection and **he** is the life. He is the "I am." He is resurrection and he is life in the very moment they are experiencing.

Resurrection presupposes death. What is the death Jesus is referring to? The Apostle Paul exclaimed that he died daily in his walk of faith (1Cor 15:31). I think Jesus was referring to dying to anything that would distract him from fully experiencing the life God had promised. He was saying to Martha to not be distracted by the death of her brother because he is the force of life. He is resurrection power.

If we are going to live the kind of lives Jesus lived, then we

are going to need to be dying daily and relying on resurrection power. Our creative life power is both destructive as well as constructive. Growth always involves the de-

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struction or dismantling of the old ways of being and doing. Regarding the process of growth, Rollo May writes, "It always involves destroying the status quo, destroying old patterns within oneself, progressively destroying what one has clung to from childhood on, and creating new and original

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forms and ways of being.” Destroying is always an aspect of creating. Only if we are dying daily are we going to be interested in Jesus’ offer of resurrection and life. Unless the life we are most passionate about is life in the here and now, then we will think of resurrection as a benefit enjoyed at the end of our lives.

Jesus said, I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:24,25) We have been entrusted with life, gifts and talents that we

are responsible to invest and multiply. May we risk living lives of faith that will demand of us daily dying and drawing upon the resurrection power of Jesus to repeatedly restore and remake us into his image.

May, R. (1977). *The Meaning of Anxiety*. New York: Norton.

“Today is life - the only life you are sure of. Make the most of today.”
~Dale Carnegie

“The more you lose yourself in something bigger than yourself, the more energy you will have.”
~Norman Vincent Peale

“Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.”
~Author Unknown



The Criminal

By Sue Blue
Blue Life Coaching

Luke 23:33-49 tells the crucifixion story of Jesus being crucified between two criminals. As I was reading and reflecting on this I realized that I have seen myself as better than the *criminals*. Reading what one of the criminals said to the one hurling insults at Jesus, “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he went on to say, “Jesus remember me when you have come into your kingdom.”

For the first time I saw the criminal as a person. He had a life, he had thoughts and dreams and he had feelings, he was not just a character or illustration in a story. He

had committed some act that resulted in his death sentence. When I compare my life to his I realize the only real difference is that he got caught. I may not have committed a crime, but I am increasingly aware of my own dark side and the false self I have erected to hide who I really am, warts and all.

And what criminal, what person, accepts responsibility like this man? “We are justly punished.” Who says that? I can’t ever remember a time when I acknowledged that I deserved the level of punishment or payback I got in life. Then, for the guy to still want something, to still hope, still believe and still ask for something on the day of his death rather than to sink into self pity is inspiring.

Jesus’ response, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” shows that Jesus was able to continue to give, love and care on the day of his death. He is over-the-top inspiring to me.

I want to be more like the responsible criminal. I want to be more honest about who I am and accept more responsibility for my lot in life. I want to increasingly accept what happens without whining, complaining or feeling sorry for myself. I am inspired to keep yearning for more, asking for more and believing in God’s goodness till the day I die. And with every moment of every day, I want to be more like Christ.



I Don't Know What I Don't Know, Part II

By Andrew Mercer

I do not feel gratitude often, I feel more like things are owed to me, or I am entitled to them. Please and thank you can be perfunctory for me, and saying sorry is one of the toughest things for me to do. While I can pretend to be nice, what I lack in authenticity comes out as superiority. Expressing sincere gratitude and sorrow threaten to take me into shame. What I don't yet realize is that not expressing myself sincerely keeps me disconnected from myself and from others. The shame I feel from being disconnected is far deeper and more painful than what I imagine feeling if I were to express my gratitude openly.

My strategy to avoid shame in reality only deepens it. I have a bad habit of routinely reopening core wounds- people don't like you, you are not valuable, you don't matter. What I don't know is that cycling in and out of shame is a childhood drama that I constantly replay. My mother's voice asks if people like me. If I'm liked then I'm happy, so I act in a way that I think they like. I do not have much respect for myself when I conform to their expectations instead of my own. Even if they like me, I don't. Though I live my life wanting to be liked, I'm not sure that being liked is the answer. I would much rather be respected for the powerful man that I am than be liked for how nice I can be. Ironically, I'm not that nice. I get others to express my anger, so as to avoid my own hostility, pain and despair. I am coming to realize that one of the

costs is that I don't know much about myself.

Growing up I often felt alone, left to my own devices, and left to figure myself out. I didn't know that I was missing out on connection; I didn't know isolation and loneliness were not normal, and I didn't know I was angry about it. Gratitude is an antidote to hostility. Being thankful for an opportunity to learn and grow instead of resenting it meets my needs for connection. In the past I have spent more time shooting the messenger than listening to the message. I used to think that gratitude was weak and humiliating, that it confirms the other person is smarter, better, stronger, and more capable. What I have not yet learned is that gratitude can build trust, intimacy and connection between two people; there is true power in connection with myself and with others

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I am learning that it is possible to receive feedback coming from a place of love not spite, with the intent to build and not destroy. I am my most attractive self when I am fully alive, expressing my emotions in the moment. I am a force to be reckoned with, I deeply love and respect myself and am grateful for the love and support I receive daily. I am proud of who I am becoming, and excited to be on the path towards transformation and growth.

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Abundant Life Fitness Seminar

June 26, 2010

Singles Workshop

July 8, 2010

Parenting Seminar

July 22nd, 2010

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