

The Story of Easter

by Anca Martin

Friendship International 2021

What is love? How do you define love?

In 1984, the band Foreigner released a song called, "I Want to Know What Love Is." The chorus goes like this, *"I want to know what love is, I want you to show me. I want to feel what love is, I know you can show me."* It is obvious from the lyrics that the songwriter did not know what love is but that he wanted to be loved nonetheless. He invited people to define love for him in hopes that he will be satisfied. But he wasn't the only one who didn't know what love is or who needed love. The song quickly became a number one hit worldwide confirming that an entire world felt just like the songwriter: unsure about love but deeply craving it.

While thousands of poets, philosophers, artists, authors, anthropologists, sociologists are still trying to understand love, Christianity has already given the answer. To the question of what is love, God answers with one of the most strikingly beautiful verses: **"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:10)**

In Christianity, it is God who defines love, not people. It is a love like no other. God shows us this perfect love by dying. That's right. God's love for people is best seen in His Son's death on the cross. God's love is best seen at Easter. The story of Easter is about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Easter tells about His death and His coming back to life again. But most of all, the story of Easter in Christianity is a story of love.

In the next few minutes, I would like to unpack 3 things God's love is by looking at the loving story of Easter:

1. **God's love is holy:** *Why Did Jesus Die?*
 2. **God's love is generous:** *What Fueled Jesus' Decision to Die?*
 3. **God's love changes everything:** *What Does Jesus' Resurrection Accomplish?*
-
1. Because God is holy, everything about Him is holy. His love is holy. His words are holy.

In His presence, only holiness can be. If anything is true about our world, it is that no one is holy. We are all broken and imperfect. The Bible calls this universal condition: sin. Sin is a word that comes from the Bible and it means to fall short of God's standard, to miss the mark. In other words, God is perfect, God calls us to live perfectly, and we are not capable to do so. Every person from every country understands what evil does in our society. Maybe you know someone who was abused. Or robbed. Or wrongly

mistreated and unjustly hurt. There is sin outside in the world, and the Bible says that there is sin inside, in our hearts: lying, hating, gossiping, envying, anger, betrayal...No one is perfect and everyone sins. Sin separates people from God, and sin separates people from one another.

Sin hurts us and everyone around us. Sin is hard to get rid of on our own. In the Bible, we learn the origin of sin, the effects of sin, but we also learn the solution for sin.

Because sin is a moral assault on God's goodness, only God could come up with the solution to fix it. We created the problem of sin, but God gives His solution for it: the death of His only and perfect Son, Jesus Christ. The solution to sin is Jesus. To the great moral problem of evil only the *greater* moral good of God can work. So, Jesus comes and is born of a virgin—that's when Christians celebrate Christmas. And at the age of 33 years, after a life of ministry to people, teaching and healing the sick, Jesus is crucified on the cross, blood flowing and breath stopping. He is buried in a cave. And after 3 days of being dead, Jesus comes back to life. He breathes again. Death has no power on the Son of God. Death is defeated. Sin is paid for. And Jesus is our victorious Savior, the only One powerful to fix the relationships between God and people, and people and people.

So why did Jesus come to die? The short answer is, Jesus died for our sins. Because God is holy, and we are not, God sent his Son so through his death, people can be made right with God again. His holy love solves humanity's sinful hearts. God himself planned this death and Jesus volunteered to do it because He was the only One who could anyway. It is a death like no other in the entire history of the world!

2. God's love is generous. Another word for generous is "large-hearted." *What Was Behind His Decision to Offer His Life as A Sacrifice?*

It was *more love*. Every year in the Spring, AT Easter, Christians remember the most significant death in all history: the death of Jesus Christ, the son of God. It happened 2,000 years ago, in the Middle East, on a hill called Golgotha. Jesus died on a cross a painful death. He was tortured, mocked, rejected, and dishonored even though Jesus was God. The Bible says that Jesus took sin upon. God loved Jesus through it all, though. He loved His Son more than a mother loves her babies. More than a wife loves her husband. And God His Father could have intervened for Jesus but if He did, then humanity wouldn't have had anymore a solution to the real problem of sin.

You may be asking, was there any other way for God to find a solution for people's sins? The answer is no, there wasn't. Because if there were, God would have chosen that solution instead of sacrificing His own Son. Jesus dying on the cross was the ONLY solution for humanity. The only way. Jesus is the only way that people can be forgiven of their sins and reconciled with God. His enormous death paid for people's enormous sin so they can enjoy enormous life with Christ. No other way was enormous enough to do that!

Why would God do that for people? The answer is the most beautiful and most unique of all religions: it was love. It was God's amazing, priceless, generous, merciful, forgiving, mature, kind love. Only in Christianity do we hear about God loving people so much that He sends His one and only Son to die for them so they can have forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life. The death of Jesus is God's declaration of love to humanity! God's love is not just emotions, though God expresses joy, kindness, goodness towards people. God's love is committed action. Jesus didn't just say He loved us, He demonstrated it with His life. *Who else would give their own child to save a whole world? What mother would depart with her son for the good of humanity?* Only God can and He did so. His love is steadfast—meaning, it never changes its mind. Once God loves, he loves forever! This is love in Christianity: not that we first loved God but that God first loved us. And His love for you and me is shown at the cross where His Son died for all my sins and for all who will believe in him. God's love is the most generous love of all.

3. *What Does His Resurrection Accomplish?* God's love changes everything.

One day, I was teaching the story of Easter to a group of women from other countries. I was talking about why Jesus died and how painful and yet important His death is in Christianity. One student asked me, "Why do Christians worship a God who is dead?" You see, I missed to emphasized that yes, Jesus died and was dead and buried for 3 days, but then. Something extraordinary happened. Something that the Bible had spoken about even before Jesus was born. After 3 days of being dead dead, Jesus came back to life. We call that, *resurrection*. To come back to life from the dead. Without Jesus coming back to life, His death would be like every other death. But the resurrection of Jesus in Christianity shows that Jesus is God, that Christianity is true, and that sin has no eternal power on human souls who follow Jesus.

One of Jesus' other names is *Savior*. Jesus saves people from sin. Anyone is welcome to Christ. He invites everyone to believe in Him and follow Him. The only way to be saved and forgiven is to believe and follow Jesus. There is no other way to be with God but through Jesus.

So, in conclusion, Jesus came to die for people's sins. His love fueled His death. And His resurrection provides humanity with a sure way to be forgiven and reconciled with God. God's love is unlike any other. My prayer is that you will allow Christ's love to bless you in this season and beyond.

Among Christians, it is common to say at Easter, "Christ is risen!" and other people would echo, "He is risen indeed!" From your friends from Friendship International, we wish you a blessed Easter this year! "Christ is risen!"