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Helping Australian Baptists Share Jesus

## Sermon Guide - Easter 2018 - What we get wrong about Easter

By Karl Faase for Crossover

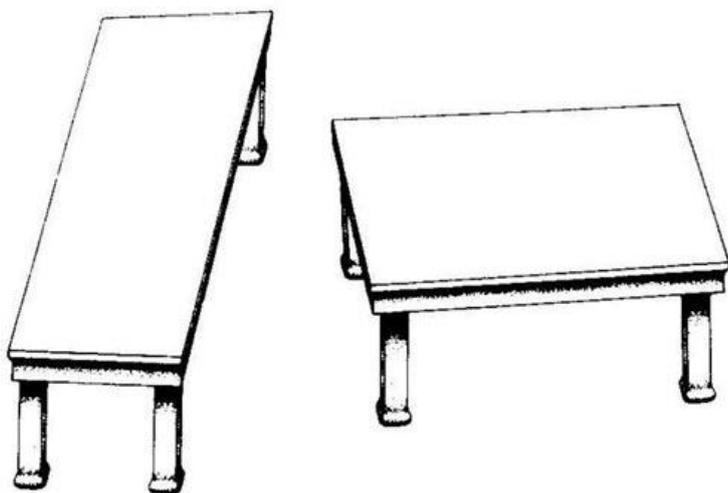
*This Sermon Guide accompanies the video "What we get wrong about Easter" available on vimeo here: <https://vimeo.com/254976316>*

There is plenty in life that we get wrong, we just don't like to admit it.

Many know the quote from **Descartes** "I think therefore I am". Twelve hundred years before him, **St Augustine** wrote - "I err therefore I am". To be wrong is a part of human nature.

### Wrong in our perceptions

We are often **wrong in our perceptions**, look at this famous graphic called the Shephard's table



<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3485780/>

What is your perception of these two tabletops? They look like they are different in size and shape.

Do you know that these two tabletops are exactly the same size, length and width. Look it up later.

This may just be a clever drawing but getting perceptions wrong can have bigger consequence. Between 1989 and 2007, 201 US prisoners were freed because DNA evidence proved that they were innocent of the crimes they had been jailed for. 77% of these prisoners had been mistakenly ID-ed by eyewitnesses. Clearly they were wrong (Why We Make Mistakes - Hallinan pg 41)

Research demonstrates that the following are human error...

- 70% plane crashes
- 90% car accidents
- 90% of workplace accidents

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## We are also wrong about Self Perception

US Army did a piece of analysis of soldiers. They asked them “How good a shot are you?” Not surprisingly most said they were a good shot. They predicted that they would score well on the range. After shooting the soldiers scores were tallied against their predictions, 75% said that they would hit more targets than that actually did. Also 25% shot so poorly they failed to qualify. (Why We Make Mistakes – Hallinan pg 155)

Let’s not be too hard on soldiers. Psychiatrist Gordon Livingston (book – Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart) said he has never met a person who did not think that they were wise, had a sense of humor and were good drivers. The number of car crashes dispels that as a lack of self-understanding!

## What do we get wrong about faith and Easter?

So there is plenty we get wrong in life but what about the events of Easter? What does our community generally get wrong about Easter and Christian faith?

Community perception says...

- Faith and our religion are a cultural impost on people more than a personal choice
- We know we are influenced by what our families believe. The most recent **Faith and Belief** research showed that most people are deeply influenced by the faith of their family - 57% said family were the most influential on their beliefs. ([www.faithandbelief.org.au](http://www.faithandbelief.org.au))
- This translates into the thinking that we are only Christians due to our culture and our families
- Marx developed this theory believing that religion was a way of dominating people and controlling society, calling religion the “opiate of the people”
- In Australia the largest percentage connected to any religion are Christians. The default is that this is why people follow Christian faith.
- Belief is reduced to a culture, society-wide outcome of “group think”
- The parallel thinking is that the Bible and Jesus’ influence is on cultural ideologies and values.

## How did Jesus influence people?

What was the influence Jesus had on people from various parts of the community and why did crowds follow Him? It is clear that a pattern emerges.

### 1) Woman at the Well – John 4:6-26

- a. Jesus meets her at the well at midday, in the heat of the day. The assumption is that the woman was there at that time to avoid meeting others v 6-7
- b. Jesus interacts with her on the issue of water and thirst v 10-15
- c. Jesus reveals that He knows her life - that she has had five husbands and that man she is presently with is not her husband (perhaps this was why she was avoiding meeting others from the village by a midday trip to the well) v 18
- d. Jesus clearly impacts her life individually
- e. Very soon after, she returns with the whole village with whom she had told her story, “He told me everything I ever did v39
- f. She brings the village to Jesus (4:39-42)
- g. Major impact on this village because Jesus changed this women’s life





## 2) Demon possessed Man Mark 5:1-20

- a. Jesus travelled to an area east of Lake Galilee called Decapolis (referred to in v1 as Gerasenes but commentators make clear that this is the Gentile area of Decapolis)
- b. Obviously Gentile due to the herd of pigs referred to later v13-14
- c. First interaction is with a tortured man, just one individual. Jesus is not met by crowds v 1-2
- d. In the interaction, the man is racially healed v15
- e. He wants to follow Jesus v 18
- f. Jesus both urges him to stay & tell others how his life has been changed v 19-20
- g. Began to tell people in the region (Decapolis) his story v20
- h. Jesus returns to Decapolis – Mark 7:31**
- i. Two outcomes
  - i. First, many people wanted to be healed Mark 7:32-35
  - ii. Second, large crowds came out to meet Jesus, listen to his teaching and to learn Mark 8:1
- j. The demon possessed man healed by Jesus has told the message of his change in life and radical healing so much so that when Jesus returns, crowds are waiting.

### Still occurs today

- 3) **Still occurs today** – If you are thinking that this happened in Biblical times but not today, the following story is from Australian Christian leader Jossy Chacko and the ministry of Empart in Northern India. Jossy told this story when he was interviewed by Karl Faase for the series Towards Belief

#### **Jossy Chacko story from India**

This lady was sick and was in hospital and experienced the love of Jesus for the first time in her life. Then there was no church, nobody had ever heard the name of Jesus even where she came from. She goes back and started to tell the people that she met about Jesus. And about two years later she contacts the pastor that she met in the hospital and invites him to come back to that village and when he arrives, there in an open rice field, were more than 25,000 people waiting to hear him.

### Early Church influence

#### Paul in Ephesus

- Paul comes to the city of Ephesus and first goes to teach in the Synagogue Acts 19:8-9
- After tension in the Synagogue Paul takes a small group and begins to meet with them and teach them in the Hall of Tyranus for two years v9-10
- Due to remarkable signs and wonders in answer to prayer there is a radical shift in the allegiance of the people of Ephesus and the region v17-20
- They chose to follow Jesus and to take such radical steps of commitment that they destroyed all their scrolls and articles dedicated to the pagan religions & practices that they used to follow v19
- The economy and culture changed so much that there was a riot as people worried about their economic future v23-28





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- In this whole story there is no mention of political pressure on this man who sold idols or on the priests of the pagan gods. No organized boycotts of artisans, no campaign of community rights, values or morals
- This is a community changed because people, one at a time had their life changed by Jesus and they changed the economic fabric of Ephesus

## How has Jesus change the world?

- One person at a time
- One life at a time

## Take these two examples mentioned in the video today

### Augustine

- Academic from North Africa who ended up lecturing in Milan
- He had a mistress from age 15
- Enjoyed the party life of the city
- Spirit of God pursued Augustine, one day he heard a voice in his garden saying “take up and read”. When he did, it was the book of Romans and this was a step that changed his life
- He went on to have an enormous influence on the world
- Became the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa
- Wrote remarkable literary works such as his Confessions & City of God
- Pivotal church leader of the 5<sup>th</sup> century

### Wilberforce

- Lost his dad at 9
- Studied at Cambridge but enjoyed the social life more than study
- Member for Hull and went into British parliament at age 21
- Friend of William Pitt, son of the then PM of UK
- Holidayed with family members and Isaac Milner, a academic from Cambridge, on a grand tour of Europe
- As a result of the discussion with Milner, Wilberforce decided to follow Jesus
- When he returns from his holiday, he wonders if he should continue on in parliament
- Meets with then Anglican minister and past slave trader John Newton, who tells him to stay in parliament - that this was ‘his time’
- Commits to two great aims in life, the abolition of slavery and the reformation of manners (morals) in the UK.
- It took 19 years of campaigning in Parliament for slave trading to be banned in 1807
- Died just three days after slavery was abolished across the Commonwealth nations in 1833
- Jesus changed his life and he changed the world

## What about you?

Jesus calls you to make a choice to follow him, like Augustine, Wilberforce and billions of other people, but it is an individual choice.

Easter celebrates the death and resurrection of Jesus so that every person can be right with God

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Jesus' death was for our wrong doing - those things that distance us from God. Jesus' resurrection demonstrates that sin is beaten, death is overcome, eternity is possible.

This is the truth that Augustine believed.  
This is what Wilberforce followed.

Is this for you today?

Why not use this prayer as a set of words to accept what Jesus has done for you personally. I want to encourage you, that if you are ready, to pray this prayer with me today

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus I thank you that you love me

I thank you for the death of Jesus on my behalf

I come to you today and say I am sorry

I am sorry for ignoring You

I am sorry for how I have lived

I ask for Your forgiveness

Today I put my life into Your Hands

I pray you will fill me with Your Spirit

And I pray for the courage to live what I say I believe

AMEN

