



THE CROSS CENTERED LIFE

BY C.J. MAHANEY

(MULTNOMAH, 2006/166 PAGES)

JOSHUA EARL

Almost eight years ago, I was frantically trying to prepare my Easter Sunday sermon, laboring to produce a fresh perspective on the old, old story. I combed through the commentaries and books on my shelf pleading with men smarter than me to shed light on an event which, to my shame, had become “old hat” rather than “good news.”

Then, I saw it. Tucked out of sight was a small book entitled *Living the Cross Centered Life (LTCCCL)* by C.J. Mahaney, which apparently had been gifted to me but never opened. Hope (for my sermon) flickered when I saw the word *cross*. I took the book down, opened the first page, and began reading. Something like an hour later, I finished the book with wet eyes and a gaping mouth. It felt like a revival.

Until that moment, my lack of joy was a symptom, according to Mahaney, of not being cross-centered—and more specifically, no longer being amazed at the wonder of God’s grace shown to me in the gospel. Apparently, I wasn’t alone. Recognizing that this apathy is the temptation of every Christ-follower, Mahaney leads his readers by the hand on a thoughtful and compelling journey to the foot of the cross, weaving in both a personal story and powerful quotations. After all, he says, “grace is never more amazing than when I’m looking intensely at the cross” (21).

The book is as pastoral as it is practical. About half of the book paints a vivid, nearly photographic portrait of what Jesus did and the significance of His work. The other half is an indispensable application (the last chapter, “The Cross Centered Day,” is especially beneficial).

Chapters three through eight provide an escape route for the Christian stuck in the pit of dreary introspection. Chapter six, “Staring into the Cup,” is incredibly potent. Peer into the heart-wrenching scene of Gethsemane and

be baffled anew by the thought that the cup of God's wrath "should rightfully be thrust into my hand and yours...[but] instead, Jesus freely takes it Himself...so that from the cross He can look down at you and me, whisper our names, and say, ' I drain this cup for you...who have hated Me '" (p. 82).

The chapters on assurance of salvation, legalism, and condemnation are timely for the weary soul, reminding us "that those who trust in Christ can never be condemned" (126). Breathe in this fresh air: "You can't atone for your sin. That's why Jesus did it for you...you need carry [it] no more" (129).

I have reread *LTCL* several times since stumbling upon it eight years ago, and each time I open it, the amazingness of grace flowers again in my heart like a long-awaited springtime thaw. Whether you are a new Christian or a seasoned saint who has forgotten the shining beauty of Christ's work, put it on your yearly reread list, and allow the gospel to revive your weary soul!

*The chapters
on assurance of
salvation, legalism,
and condemnation
are timely for the
weary soul.*

JOSHUA EARL

Joshua Earl serves as senior pastor of [Grace City Church Wilmington](#) (Wilmington, NC).