

not a fan.
COMPLETELY. COMMITTED. FOLLOWER.

the comfortable cross

Pillow-top mattress, or bed of nail top?

Running shoes or wooden clogs?

A picnic at the beach or a picnic in death valley?

Fudge without walnuts, or a needle in the eye?

What is the common denominator here? Comfort. Our culture is reeeeealy into comfort. Comfort sells. Comfy chairs, comfy cars, comfy beds, comfy jobs, and the pinnacle of comfy; the Snuggy.

TV shows that make us glad for what we do. Dirty Jobs, Deadliest Catch, survivalist shows, Wipe Out.

One area where comfy has become dangerous, and I don't mean belt-line. **Our relationship with Jesus**. As we try to be more comfortable in the physical we try to become more comfortable in the spiritual. We are used to comfort.

Padded pews (not here), heat in the winter, AC in the summer, soft leather-bound Bibles, convenient parking, well appointed buildings, etc.

The teaching can also become padded. Jesus becomes a pushover and the Bible a story book from which we only read the warm-fuzzy stuff.

[2] **Luke 9:23**

What do comfort craving fans do with the cross? Kinda hard to avoid. What do you do with a statement like this? Pretty soon it gets watered down in "we all have our cross to bear." Cross eventually only makes an appearance at Easter in our churches, yet is on our t-shirts, around our necks in precious metals and jewels. We end up with a comfortable cross.

The cross is a touch sell! Marketing, man. If you want people to come to Jesus you have to sell him. But what do we lose?

[3] **1 Corinthians 1:18**. The Jewish perspective of this as a sign, the Greek perspective of this as wisdom (**Acts 17:32**).

Why would God use a symbol of torture, death, and weakness to save the world? We don't have a problem with it because we've dressed it up and no longer really see it as a

means of execution. On top of churches, part of the logo. If a 1st century believer say this they would be freaked out, not out of irreverence but confusion. Like how we might react to this image [4] (Jesus on the electric chair). [5] Or this for our new logo?

To the world, this is weakness and foolishness. And it's becoming this way in the church. Those who see crucifixion as divine child abuse! The fact that it is weakness and foolishness is the point. It makes the cross beautiful. *God takes something like this and says, "I'll use that."*

[6] 1 Corinthians 1:22.

Who else but God could take a cross that represented defeat and turn it into a symbol of victory?

Who else but God could take a cross that represented guilt and turn it into a symbol for grace?

Who else but God could take a cross that represented condemnation and turn it into a symbol of freedom?

Who else but God could take a cross that represented pain and suffering and turn it into a symbol of healing and hope?

Who else but God could take a cross that represented death and turn it into a symbol of life?

Only God could do that! What would appear to be the ultimate moment of God's weakness and foolishness is actually the moment of His ultimate strength and wisdom. Here is why this important. If you leave here today remembering only one thing from what I've said, remember this, get this:

[7] What God did for the cross, he can do for you.

When you are the weakest, when you realize you don't have it together, when you realize you can't do it, that's when God is the strongest in your and for you. The upside down truth of the cross is that when you are weak, then you are strong.

[8] 1 Corinthians 1:27. God doesn't use the cross in spite of it's weakness, He uses it because of it's weakness. God chooses the weak things. God has always done this. The Bible is a history of God using weak people.

Abraham was old and infertile.

Jacob was insecure.

Leah was ugly.

Joseph was humiliated.

Moses couldn't talk goodly.

Gideon was broke.

Samson was proud.

Rahab was immoral.

David was an adulterer and a murderer.

Elijah was suicidal.
Jeremiah was depressed.
Jonah was disobedient.
Naomi was a widow.
John the Baptist was a freak.
Peter was impulsive and hot tempered.
Martha worried a lot.
The Samaritan woman had four failed marriages.
Zacchaeus was unpopular.
Thomas had doubts.
Paul had poor health.
Timothy was scared.

The Bible us full of imperfect misfits who discovered that weakness is strength. When you and I figure this out and let it be so, that's when we will see God move with even more power in our lives. Share the gospel. "But I can't..." Exactly. Trust God with your (blank). "But I have to do..." No, leave it to the Lord.

[9] 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. This is where we need to die and then live. Paul says "I delight in my weakness." Most of us don't say that. Most of us don't use that in a job interview. When asked, "What is your greatest weakness?" we don't answer, "I'm a procrastinator, I'm never on time, I don't get along well with others, I don't know how to turn on a computer and when I do I'm on Facebook all day." We try to come up with something that sounds like a positive. "I work too hard. I'm a perfectionist. I'm too good looking." Some 2000 self-help books published every year all saying the same thing; you can do it.

Ever watch a little kid try to carry something too heavy for them? Eventually they will get too tired and you need to carry the thing and them. This is what Jesus has done for us.

The little critter that hides in the crack of the rock. This is what God is for us.

The cross is an instrument of death that brings life. This is what Jesus has done for us.

The death and resurrection are weakness and foolishness to the world, but the power of God for new life and for living. What are you going to do with it? What are you going to let Jesus do with you?

Prayer -Do for us what you did for the Cross. Do for us what you did for the Cross. Do for me, do for this church, do for this city, do for this nation, do for this world what you did for the Cross, that we might begin to understand why you chose such an uncomfortable means of self-sacrifice. Do for us what you did for the Cross.