

FAITH ASKING QUESTIONS



A ST FRANCIS COLLEGE SHORT COURSE

THE TRANSCRIPT

Episode 6 Life, death and what comes next

6.3 Why do people have to die?

Cameron Venables: Biology would suggest we are finite beings and that ourselves eventually have a use by date. There's something within our DNA which will cause us to go "ok we're good" and so biologically we come to an end and the next generation comes up. I'm kind of glad about that actually, the thought of being 1000 years old would be too much. So there's something inbuilt within us that means we have our time and then we die so that the next generation can come up.

Jazz Dow: I feel like silence is the appropriate answer to that question because again it comes back to that sense of mind of God, mind of humans and in a big sense, I have no idea. But we can grapple with the answer and acknowledge that to be human is to be fully human and to be part of the created order. The earth dies and lives and dies and lives. So life is amazing. We've got relationships, we've got joy, we've got food – we've got all the good things of life but life comes with pain and death-experiences. So death isn't only not breathing anymore and being buried, the body giving up. Death is also grieving, when someone else dies, when poverty hits, when we lose a job, when we lose a pet, when we experience the depths of humanity that is so painful. Yet someone reminded me (Peter Catt on the "On the Way" podcast recently, listen to it here: <https://omny.fm/shows/on-the-way/on-the-way-the-cruciform-pattern>), he was speaking of the cruciform pattern – life shows us that there is always a way to transform out of pain, that the day always comes from the night. So, why do people have to die? I don't know why people have to die, but I know it's part of being human. And that life will always come, the sense that the earth dies in order to bear fruit. Maybe death is something we don't give enough time to see its gifts.

Marie Louise Craig: This is a really hard question and when I talk to people about it I decided that we have to be really sensitive to what it means to them for people to die, but I think the best way to answer this for me is that same idea that death is a gateway. I remember preaching once (and this is really funny) my youngest son always answered my rhetorical questions in my sermons...very embarrassing sometimes. So



one day I said a question something like “how do you get to heaven?” and this little voice comes from the congregation and says “well, you gotta die first” and it really distilled for me that we often see death as a medical problem that we need to stop, but ultimately death is part of what happens to people and so when Andrew said that it's just so jolly logical – to get to heaven you've got to die first – so it's that gateway idea I was talking about (q2) but then I thought about how does that feel if I'm the one that's left behind? And is a life long enough? You know when children die, or when someone has just finished university, they've got their whole lives ahead of them and how do they die? How do we cope with that?

I go back to Psalm 139 where it says all our days are numbered. So if I remember that God has a set period of time for each person, I don't know what that set period of time is for any person in my life but I trust that he has got that in place – that's part of my assurance. So I have an older sister who died when she was 41 and coming to terms with that was really difficult, and being very angry with God for a long time, but I'm a long way from that now and I look at it and say “Well we learned so much from the way she lived her life” and there was so much that she contributed to us that was not wasted because of what we did after she died. But we still miss her. Do people have to die, well yes, its part of the way God designed us. How we deal with that will depend on every death that we have to face, because some deaths are a release, and it's a good life, and some deaths we just don't get.

You can find the videos of these sessions, along with reflection questions for individuals or groups at www.stfran.qld.edu.au under “SFC Short Courses—Faith Asking Questions”.

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