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Christianity is a Crutch

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You have probably heard it said: ‘Christianity is a crutch’. People have said this and things like it for quite a while—they usually mean that Christianity is for weak people who can’t stand on their own two feet. People who can’t deal with the reality of life need a crutch to rest their lives on. And Christianity is one such crutch, so it is said.

I agree. Christianity *is* a crutch.

Christians are, after all, lame. And I don’t just mean that they are eye-rollingly cringe-worthy (though sometimes they are that, too). I mean Christians are lame in the sense that, by being Christian, they are actually admitting to being lame—unable to stand on their own two feet. Think of Jesus’ call: ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.’ (Mat 11:28). Christians have answered that call, and by doing so they admit they are weary and need someone else to give them rest.

In fact, far from being strong enough to stand on their own, Christians actually claim to be sick. Because Jesus made it very clear that it ‘is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick’, and that’s who he came to call (Mark 2:17). Again, Christians have answered that call—they’ve called the doctor, and admitted they are sick.

But the thing is, in Jesus’ view, the sickness which means we need to go to the doctor for the crutch—well, it’s rather widespread. Absolutely widespread in fact—to say it is an epidemic would be rather an understatement. The problem is, this sort of sickness comes from the malfunction of a particular human organ which all of us have, and which is central to each of us—the human heart. Jesus says in Mark 7:21-23 that the bile which really makes us sick comes from the human heart. And that leaves us in serious need of a doctor. We are *all* sick, weak, lame. Every human being.

Problem is, we are often also blind—too blind to see our own sickness. A bit like me when something goes wrong—so often it is only the third

or fourth or fifth time that my wife Sarah says ‘go to the doctor’ that I actually admit that something might be happening which needs more than just my own strength and a good dose of vitamin C. We are often like that about our heart-sickness too—unwilling to look closer at the reality of our sick hearts, lest we find we are actually in need of treatment.

Yet so often in so many of us there is still an unsettledness—a niggle that maybe we aren’t quite as healthy as we think. We still seem to wander and search. We are so often ultimately unsatisfied with the reductionist assurances all about us—the ones which say that if we hold to our own self-imposed, ultimately arbitrary, standards of meaning and purpose and rightness, we’ll be fine. So often we echo the immortal words of the Instant Kiwi ad: ‘I feel like I need something else’.

Part of us still feels that somehow we need a crutch, something more to rest on—even if our desire to be self-sufficiently strong gets in the way of us calling on the doctor who could help us.

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So next time someone says Christianity is crutch, or something like that, why not agree with them? And then suggest, as one lame beggar to another, that you know a really good doctor who specialises in blind lame beggars like all of us. In this year of the anniversary of the first preaching of the gospel in our land, the proclamation of the remedy to all our sickness, why not look for opportunities to share this compelling, demanding, and ultimately radically life-and-health-giving news?