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7 'Churchy' Words That Christians Don't Understand

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Occasionally I find myself in a conversation with a non-Christian friend. Sometimes, I have to pay close attention to the language I use if the talk turns to things related to God and ultimate reality. I want to be understood, but the normal Christian terms are a foreign language to many people, Christians included. The terms are difficult to use when they don't communicate. No longer are Christian terms and biblical concepts commonplace. Most people are not familiar with the story of Job, or Peter's triple denial of Jesus. Things have changed; meanings that once were common in the culture have become rare in the minds of many people. Certainly we must continue to use large words that carry theological weight: propitiation, justification, atonement, righteousness, regeneration, trinity, incarnation, and redemption (among others). Each of these stands for a definite doctrinal teaching of the Bible that must be explained, grasped, and repeated using special terminology. I don't think that other terms will do for describing these realities of salvation and God. The terms that are distinctly religious but don't seem to communicate any longer are a distinct category that causes me concern. I ask students what they mean when they say, for example, "It's for God's glory." I reply, "What do you mean by glory?" They don't have a clue. They really mean that that the event or decision in question somehow serves God's purposes. If so, then let's just say that. My concern is that we have settled for using as jargon the Christian terminology because it seems rightly religious, not because we understand or intend the actual meanings these terms stand for. Here is my list of seven troublesome words and brief explanations. Photo courtesy: ©Thinkstock

Date created: 2024/04/07