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Granted that we all want our friends and families (F&F) to know the love of God in Christ Jesus, how do we present that message? Yes, I know, the fundamental start point is to love and serve them – to ***show*** them that love – but if they are to come to faith then at some point we will need to (or ask someone else to) articulate the good news of what Jesus has done for them.

So let me give you the core of two outline models of the gospel and see how you react to them. But remember that the way we see and feel about God will determine how we present the gospel.

Model A: God is righteous and pure; we are sinners, separated from God; BUT God is also love; SO Jesus died on the cross to end that separation and bring us back to God.

Model B: God loves us, accepts us and offers us life; BUT sin is a fatal disease; SO Jesus died on the cross in our place to heal that disease and bring us back to God.

It might be helpful to stop now and think about those; mull them over; maybe lay them before the Lord?

OK, so how did you react? Which of those two – if fleshed out and made less theological – would your F&F be able to relate to? (e.g. ‘None of us is perfect, and you only have to look around to see the evil that comes when people allow that disease to take hold of them.’)

Which of those two sounds more like the God as revealed in Scripture? And, more importantly, which of those two is more like the God revealed in Jesus (in the Scriptures)? For example, which of those two is more like the Hosea-God of the OT; and which is more like the prodigal Father; or the profligate farmer, chucking his seed willy-nilly; or Jesus when faced with the woman caught in adultery: ‘Neither do I condemn you!’

Looking back over the past 10/12 years, I can see that it’s Model A that I had been basing my life on when I lost my faith totally and when I tried to rebuild it. And it’s Model B that I have gloriously discovered of late and which has transformed my faith totally.

What was it about Model A that I reacted against? When I started to write, I thought it was penal substitution that was the culprit – and I looked at other ways of seeing God’s salvific work in Christ, which helped. But actually the problem goes much deeper.

Model A is based on the view of God as a righteous judge – who is also loving, and so God finds a way to set things right.

Model B¹ is based on the definition: God *is* love – who is also righteous, and so God will do whatever it takes to set things right for each of us.

A subtle but very important difference, in my view.

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¹ If you want to think through salvation as healing, try *Healing the Gospel* by Derek Flood.