

2 | Why the Resurrection Matters



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

We live daily with all kinds of inventions that have dramatically changed the way we live and work: The Gutenberg printing press, invented in the 15th century, enabled the mass production of words and ideas. The battery, introduced in 1800, gave us a way to store energy. Edison's electric light (1879) illuminated what we do day and night.

Inventions like these have truly transformed the ways we live and work, but they've been around so long and are so commonplace today, we no longer give them much thought. Just think how difficult it would be to live in 2020 without lights and batteries.

Not all life-changing events should be so taken for granted or overlooked. Consider the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His resurrection has been a central truth of Christianity for two thousand years, and sadly, many Christians can repeat the facts of the resurrection while never contemplating the implications of that truth for their daily lives. Jesus' defeat of the power of sin and death is truly a game changer for our lives—now and forever.

GROUP TIME

THE POINT: The _____ of Christ changes _____.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul stressed the importance of an actual and historical resurrection. He asserted in verse 14, “if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith.” Paul made this statement to respond to some of the Corinthian Christians who didn’t believe in the resurrection. Paul offered the conviction that if there were no resurrection, then to proclaim the risen Jesus was to give false testimony about God (v. 15).

1 Corinthians 15:20-22 ²⁰ But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. ²² For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

Christ’s resurrection makes _____ resurrection possible.

Beginning in verse 20, Paul used an analogy to further explain what Christ’s death means for all humanity. The resurrected Christ is “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (v. 20). In the Old Testament ceremony of the firstfruits, the people brought their first (and best) portions of the harvest to give them as offerings to God (Leviticus 23:9-14). “The firstfruits indicated that the entire harvest was soon to follow.”⁷ The significance of this analogy is that Christ’s resurrection precedes the harvest of others, when His followers will be raised from death. While physical death is inevitable, Jesus’ resurrection demonstrates that our death isn’t the end of the story.

1 Corinthians 15:23-28 ²³ But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; afterward, at his coming, those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he abolishes all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he puts all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be abolished is death. ²⁷ For God has put everything under his feet. Now when it says “everything” is put under him, it is obvious that he who puts everything under him is the exception. ²⁸ When everything is subject to Christ, then the Son himself will also be subject to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.

Christ’s resurrection means He reigns as _____ over _____.

With everything that comes at us in life—diseases, injuries, heartbreak, financial instability, disasters, and war—what is the worst thing that can happen? Death. Of all our “enemies,” death is the worst because it claims finality on our lives and on the lives of those we love.

But Jesus changed that. “The last enemy to be abolished is death” (v. 26). By defeating death as an enemy, Jesus demonstrated with finality that He is the Lord of all things. Over the course of Jesus’ earthly life, the disciples and others saw Him command many forces. He commanded the wind and the waves on the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:23-27). The demons submitted to Him when He exorcised them (vv. 28-34). He healed multitudes of people of their diseases and infirmities (9:35). However, when Jesus physically rose from the dead, He demonstrated that even death had finally submitted to His authority.

1 Corinthians 15:54-58 ⁵⁴ When this corruptible body is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting? ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! ⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Victory in Christ means what we _____ for Him matters.

Since death is the consequence of sin (Romans 6:23), then Jesus’ defeat of death also demands a defeat of the power of sin. Jesus didn’t just change our “end game”; He changed the way we live our earthly lives here and now. Sin doesn’t have power over those who have trusted in Jesus for new life. This means we no longer have to succumb to the power of sin. Christ’s resurrection means we don’t live our lives in vain. Everything we do matters in this life. “Your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

DEATH IS DEFEATED

Use the space below to record items or images that represent death’s “sting” to you. You can write a list, draw a picture, and so on. Then record how Jesus’ resurrection ultimately removes the sting from each item.

ENGAGE

LIVE IT OUT

The resurrection of Jesus is a foundational doctrine and truth that transforms all of life. How will you live out that truth?

- ▶ **Explore.** Read through all of 1 Corinthians 15. Make a list of all the attributes Paul records about Christ. Review this list, noting the items that encourage and strengthen your faith.
- ▶ **Confess.** If there is an area of your life in which you have allowed sin to have power over you, confess that to God. Acknowledge that sin has no power over you because of Christ. Choose to live under His lordship.
- ▶ **Serve.** Find an area of ministry where you can get involved. Don't let hesitancy or fears make you feel inadequate to serve. Live under the lordship of Christ, knowing that you never serve Him in vain.

TALK IT OUT

Want to go a step further? Gather with two or three Christ-followers of the same gender. Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 54-58, then use the following summary and questions for a deeper discussion.

Based on the increased church attendance on Easter, it's not surprising that two-thirds of Americans believe Jesus rose from the dead. That might sound encouraging, but unfortunately, not all of them believe everything the Bible says about Christ's resurrection. Many fail to consider the life-changing importance the resurrection has for our daily lives. Because Jesus lives, we can have a sure hope that impacts how we approach each day.

What facts did Paul establish in verses 23-28 about the end of the world?

What emotions do you experience when you read verses 54-58?

How can the truth of Christ's resurrection encourage us in our work for the Lord?

DAY 1: Christ's resurrection gives us hope.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-22.

In an atheistic view of life, death *is the end* of the story. It's the finality of every individual. No matter what you thought, said, or did in this life, you end up the same as everyone else, and the same as all matter: dead or destroyed. Nothing you have done in life has ultimate significance since you will face no judgment and have no afterlife. This is a sad, horrifying, and utterly hopeless view when taken to its logical conclusion. No matter what good or evil you did, in the end, you just die and go back to dirt.

In striking contrast to this view are Paul's words in verses 21-22—that through one man came death but through another came life. Christ's resurrection presents a great shift. Adam's sin brought death into the world, but this shift—what Christ has done—means that death isn't *how things have to be*. Through Christ we have a way out of the mess humanity made of life and of God's creation. A singular historical event in the cosmos has overturned the effects of our sin and its destructive consequence: Jesus' resurrection. Because Christ conquered death and rose again, we have the assurance of new life, a sure hope in the things yet to come.

Summarize 1 Corinthians 15:22 in your own words in the space below.

“A singular historical event in the cosmos has overturned the effects of our sin and its destructive consequence: Jesus’ resurrection has secured new life.”

MARY JO SHARP

DAY 2: Christ's resurrection demonstrated His power.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:23-28.

The resurrection of Christ holds two significant truths:

- ▶ It wasn't just anyone who was raised from the dead; it was God incarnate.
- ▶ Jesus' power over death means He is the Lord of all.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus made claims to divinity. He forgave people's sins (Matthew 9:4-6), identified Himself as Lord of the Sabbath (12:8), knew people's innermost thoughts (v. 25), and said He was one with the Father (John 10:30). All of Jesus' claims would have been meaningless had He stayed in the grave. However, Jesus' resurrection was the ultimate evidence that He is who He claimed to be: God, the promised Messiah, and the Savior of mankind. Only God has power over death and Jesus demonstrated that power through His resurrection.

When you consider Christ's resurrection, what things are you most thankful for? Express your gratitude to God in prayer.

DAY 3: Christ's resurrection conquered death and made new life possible.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:54.

Paul's defense of the resurrection throughout 1 Corinthians 15 clearly shows that Christ indeed rose from the dead. Christ conquered the power of sin and death. Death currently holds power over us, but only for a time. Paul illustrated the magnitude of Jesus' resurrection in verse 54: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

The power of death has been removed by the victory gained through the death and resurrection of Christ. Where once existed only the end result of death and destruction, Jesus replaced these things with life. The unique Christian witness in the resurrection of Jesus is the only historically evidenced reversal of death. Everything—both our present daily lives and our future in eternity—hinges on this historical defeat of death.

How has Christ's power changed your life? Be ready to share this brief testimony with someone today who needs to hear that Christ is indeed our Savior.

DAY 4: Because of Christ's resurrection, we can experience eternal life.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:55-57.

Paul paraphrased two significant passages. First, he recalled Isaiah 25:8: "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (v. 54). Death has been devoured by Christ's victory on the cross and by His resurrection. Paul then referenced Hosea 13:14, which taunts death as a defeated enemy: "Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting?" When the resurrection occurs at Christ's return and believers are transformed, God will abolish death forever.

For Paul, death was already defeated. So it had lost its sting. Bees, wasps, and other insects can puncture the skin with painful and poisonous stings. Some may even be fatal. Jesus' resurrection has detoxified death's stinger. Death no longer carries the dread it once held for Christ's followers. Though Christians still die (and we mourn the loss of loved ones), Paul wrote that the victory over death is already a present reality for believers. Thus, he wanted the Corinthian Christians to know confidently their dead loved ones would live again, as they themselves would. Death itself is as good as dead!

Spend time in worship to celebrate what Christ has done. Praise God for the gift of victory over sin and death.



DAY 5: As Christians, we're called to share the good news.**Read 1 Corinthians 15:58.**

Christ's resurrection changed everything. Instead of being trapped in sin and the pain it creates, we can experience forgiveness and freedom in Christ. Unfortunately, a host of negative influences still seek to pull us away from the goodness of the One who gives life. The first-century Corinthian believers also faced this struggle. Therefore, Paul encouraged the Corinthians—as well as all believers—to live for the things that lead to life! We're to keep our focus on Christ and the power He gives us to overcome sin. We can turn away from temptation and pursue righteousness. Ultimately, we can look forward to eternity in Christ's presence.

But we shouldn't keep this good news to ourselves. Since we're free from the bondage of sin, we should share that freedom with the rest of the world. Because Christ rose from the dead, spreading that truth provides freedom to others. Only Christ could have accomplished such a task, and we get to be the bearers of this incredible message: new life is found in Christ. This is the work to which the resurrection calls us, and it will never be a work done in vain.

Place 1 Corinthians 15:58 someplace you will see often. Memorize this verse and ask God to help you recognize the opportunities you have to share the gospel.

“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

1 CORINTHIANS 15:56-57