

Living the Resurrection Reality

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Leader's Guide — Participant's Guide



The Resurrection Is Good News

Our faith is not in vain.

When a friend told Pastor Lee Eclov that he had a tee time reserved for Easter Sunday morning, Eclov replied, "This day we celebrate the most important thing that ever happened in human history, and you're going to play golf?!"



When you really think about it, though, it's astonishing how lightly people take the commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Fact is, sometimes even we who believe it grow a bit dull to what it means. So what does the Resurrection mean? This Bible study looks to 1 Corinthians 15 to answer that question.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1–11

Based on: The sermon series "Not In Vain," by Lee Eclov, from PreachingToday.com

Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

Note to Leader: *At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.*

Ice Breaker

Fun with History

Purpose: *To help the group start thinking about historical events.*

Activity: *Divide participants into three or four smaller groups (3–5 people each). Provide each group with paper and pencils, and ask everything to think of the five most-important moments from history. Each person can write down their suggestions, and then the subgroup should compare answers and vote to pick a consensus top-five.*

When the subgroups have finished discussing, repeat the process with the whole group. Compare lists and vote to identify the top 10 most-important moments in history.

(As a bonus, if people have access to the internet through mobile devices, see if your group can arrange those moments in chronological order.)

There are two related epic, monumental, historical events that don't fit under the umbrellas of "religion" or "philosophy of life": (1) the death of Jesus of Nazareth, the self-proclaimed Son of God, on a Roman cross; and (2) his literal and bodily resurrection from the grave three days later, *never to die again*.

What most people who are not Christians do is to regard those things like reports of UFOs. Maybe they happened, maybe they didn't; but either way, who's to say what they mean? The Bible says there is no question about what those two linked events mean, and what the Bible says they mean is at the very heart and center of the Christian faith. These two events are not historical curiosities, wonders without explanations. These two events were God "breaking and entering" into our world and they demand meaning. If someone tells you how sure they are of their atheism or their Buddhism or their Judaism, you have the right to say, "Yes, but what do you do with Jesus' deity and death? And what do you do with the historical fact of his resurrection?" Without an explanation—a meaning—their philosophy is not consistent with reality.

First Corinthians 15 is Paul's explanation of what the resurrection of Jesus Christ means. One famous writer, J. B. Phillips, called it "the most important chapter in the Bible."

Discussion Starters:

- [Q] How do you celebrate Easter?
- [Q] How have you heard non-Christians talk about the Resurrection?
- [Q] Sometimes even we who believe in the Resurrection grow a bit dull to what it means. How has that been true of you?
- [Q] When and how did you first discover the truth of Jesus' resurrection from the dead? What was your reaction?
- [Q] How do you keep the reality of the Resurrection meaningful in your everyday life?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: The Good News is Jesus' death on the cross for our sins.

Stripped of meaning, the historical fact says that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified on a Roman cross. First Corinthians 15:3 tells us what that means: that the Christ—God's Messiah—died for our sins on that cross. Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah—the Christ, the great Delivering King whom God had long promised Israel. But instead of liberating Israel from the Romans, he was killed—stone-cold dead—and was buried like dead people always are. But the *meaning* is that he died as a willing sacrifice, not a helpless victim, to enable God to justly forgive sinners like us, and to give us a safe and loving relationship with God as our heavenly Father.

The Bible tells us what Jesus' death means. It is not a senseless killing, nor an event in search of an explanation. God's requirement of a sacrifice for sin is all over the Old Testament, including the explicit promises of Isaiah 53 that "the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." This is the great hope of Christianity. God sent his Son, his Messiah, to die for our sins so we don't have to. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1–11.

- [Q] How would you explain the gospel in a nutshell?
- [Q] How does Paul distill Christianity down to its absolute essence in this passage?
- [Q] What does it mean to "receive" this gospel, or to "hold firmly to the word" that Paul preached?
- [Q] What are the reasons this historical incident is good and meaningful news? Jot down your thoughts as you read through the passage again and share them with the group.

Teaching Point Two: The Good News is also Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

The second event that demands meaning was when God raised Christ—his Messiah—from the dead on the third day after he died, never to die again. Death is the stain and stink of human existence. Death ruins lives and life. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the mighty God “bringing the chaos back into order”!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ, not back to his old life, but to a new kind of life, is the single most significant event in human history. It overcame the single greatest limitation on human beings—death. In raising Jesus to new life, God changed the entire meaning of human existence. He completely redefined our word life. This was the eighth day of creation, the re-creation of a new race of humanity, a race of people who are no longer mortal, but immortal. Lots of people believe in life after death. But Jesus' resurrection from the dead defines life after death. There isn't any other kind of life after death besides that which Jesus initiated.

[Q] What does it mean that Jesus “conquered death”?

[Q] What is significant about Paul saying Jesus was raised on the third day “according to the Scriptures”?

[Q] What do you imagine it was like for the 12, or the 500, to whom Jesus appeared? What might have been their initial reactions? What may have been the long-term effects on them?

[Q] How does Jesus redefine our word life?

Optional Activity

Purpose: *To reconsider the reality and meaning of the Resurrection.*

Activity: *As a group, view a movie clip (or a whole film) depicting Jesus' death and resurrection. Some possible films: 1977's Jesus of Nazareth; Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ; Campus Crusade for Christ's The Jesus Film; even The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe. Check your church or local library for these items.*

Teaching Point Three: The Good News is available even to the worst of us.

Remember how Paul said he was the last of the eyewitnesses of the risen Christ? He marvels at this not only because he saw Jesus long after he had ascended into heaven, but because he felt he was the last person on the face of the earth who deserved to see Jesus (15:9–11). Paul, the persecutor and murderer of Christians, the hater of Jesus himself, is proof that no one is out of the reach of God's grace. If God would save him from his sins, and give him the holy honor of serving God,

well, he can surely do it for anyone who believes “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Look again 1 Corinthians 15:9–11.

[Q] Have you ever felt as though you were “out of reach of God’s grace”? Explain.

[Q] What does this passage tell you about Paul?

[Q] What does it tell you about God’s grace?

[Q] What encourages you here, and how does it motivate you?

Part 3 **Apply Your Findings**

The apostle Paul concludes in verse 11, “... this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.” If you are a Christian, this is the heart of your faith. God’s good news is not just that we can have him in our lives, but that he will put his life in ours—abundant and invigorating now, and death-defeating and eternal forever.

Does your way of looking at the world—your philosophy of life—account for these two incontrovertible historical events: the death of Christ for our sins and his resurrection three days later, never to die again? Would you like to have God, alive and loving, in your life? What better time to be born again, this time not as a mortal, but as an immortal in the likeness of the risen Christ!

Action Point: If you have not put your trust in this good, meaningful news of Jesus, then tell God you believe, that you want to receive forgiveness for your sins, and that you want new life in Jesus.

Or if you’ve already done that, think about what it means for your life that Jesus rose from the dead. Spend some time alone worshiping God over those truths. Then jot down some thoughts on how they motivate you to action!

—*Study by Lee Eclov, with Kyle White*

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Teaching Point One: The Good News is Jesus' death on the cross for our sins.

Teaching Point Two: The Good News is also Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

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The Resurrection Happened Indeed!

It all comes down to this.

Bodies are a pain. Oh, I know a body can be beautiful: a Baryshnikov dance, babies, and so on. And the psalmist said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." But still, bodies are a pain. There is so much we cannot do. There are so many times our bodies' desires, demands, faults, and frailties stymie our heart and mind and spirit. No wonder that when the Greek philosophers were shaping a religion, many of them ditched the body after it died and envisioned immortality as spirits free of the millstone of their bodies. To the contrary, this discussion will show the importance of Christ's bodily resurrection.



Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:12–20

Based on: The sermon series "It All Comes Down to This," by Lee Eclov, from PreachingToday.com

Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

Note to Leader: *At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.*

Ice Breaker **Built to Last**

Supplies Needed: *Several packs of drinking straws*

Purpose: *To help group members see the strength of working together in the Body of Christ.*

Activity: *Divide the group into teams of four or five members. Give each subgroup two packs of plastic drinking straws, about 200 straws for each group. Challenge each subgroup build the tallest and sturdiest straw house that they can in five minutes.*

When the time is up, appoint three judges (from different subgroups) to determine which straw house is the winner. (You can allow discussion here for a few minutes.)

When the judging is over, transition to the theme of the study by saying, "It's sad but true—our earthly bodies were not designed to last..."

Some of the first Christians in Greece during the first century were happy to hear that Jesus is the Savior who forgives our sins, that he is the Son of God, even that he lives forever. But they nixed the whole resurrection-of-the-body business. "Can't be!" they said. "Bodies are a pain. They're baggage. Once they're in the ground, that's where they stay. Good riddance!"

So the apostle Paul wrote them a letter. "There are two things every new Christian gets right at the beginning," Paul said, in effect. I received these two truths when I became a Christian, and these are the first two things I preached to you, and that you received: (1) Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and he was buried; (2) He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and he appeared in his new body to all kinds of witnesses in all kinds of places. . . . Whether you heard it from those witnesses or from me, this is what we preach and this is what you believed. But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Today, there are all kinds of reasons why people do not believe in physical resurrection. And there are many who do not believe that Jesus himself rose physically from the dead. In this part of this long chapter on the resurrection, Paul says this: If bodily resurrection is not possible, you take away the resurrection of Jesus. And if you take the resurrection of Christ from Christians, you take all we have.

Discussion Starters:

- [Q] Without going into detail, what's hurting on, or in, your body right now? Or when did you realize your body was not what it once was?
- [Q] What objections have you heard in response to the bodily resurrection of Jesus?
- [Q] Who cares if Jesus rose bodily from the grave? What difference does it make?
- [Q] What convinced you of Jesus' bodily resurrection?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Without the resurrection of Christ our faith is empty.

Someone sells you a big treasure chest. You give all you have for it. But when you open it, there's nothing inside. It's worthless. To deny the bodily resurrection of Christ is to gut Christianity. Without the resurrection, our Christian faith would be worthless because it would be empty. What would be lost "if Christ has not been raised"?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12–14.

- [Q] Why would Paul have to write to Christians to convince them of Christ's bodily resurrection?
- [Q] What evidence do you find of Christ's resurrection in the lives of believers around you? Your own life?
- [Q] Are there any ways the church, and/or you, live as though the resurrection never happened? If so, how?

Teaching Point Two: Without the resurrection of Christ, we've been wrong about God.

We tell people all the time what God is like. We get our information from all over the Bible, but we get our most significant proof from the death and resurrection of Christ. But if God did not raise Jesus from the dead, we have misrepresented him. It was all speculation, at best. Lies, at worst. God is not at all who we say he is if he did not raise Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:15.

- [Q] What caused you to put your faith in God in the first place?

[Q] If the resurrection was removed from the Scriptures and our belief statements, what kind of God would we be left with?

[Q] What kind of God do we worship, if indeed Christ is raised from the dead? What other things about God can we be sure of? Make a list and discuss it.

Teaching Point Three: Without the resurrection of Christ, our hope of salvation is futile.

When the apostle Paul says here, “your faith is futile,” the Greek word carries the idea that it’s worthless because it was either deceptive or powerless. It is a spiritual Ponzi scheme, the faith of one sucker feeding the faith of the next. In the end there are no assets. If Christ has not been raised, if there is no resurrection of the dead, then we are “still in our sins.” Even if Jesus started the work of saving sinners on the cross, if he is still in the grave, then the debt he came to pay is still being paid. Justice is still not done. Jesus was wrong in his last words: it was not finished, and will never be finished, for God has nothing else up his sleeve—if Christ has not been raised.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:16–19.

[Q] What would it mean for our salvation or forgiveness of sin if Christ has not been raised? How would we obtain them?

[Q] Why is it not enough to hope in Christ just for this life?

[Q] What does Paul mean that if the Resurrection did not occur, “we are to be pitied more than all men”?

[Q] If Christ is indeed raised, what kind of salvation do we have? How does that truth motivate you?

Optional Activity

Purpose: *To consider the importance of the Resurrection in our life stories.*

Activity: *Provide each group member with pen and paper to write “anti-testimonies.” Imagine there was no Resurrection, thus no forgiveness or salvation. How would your life have turned out so far? Write a one-page narrative, like a testimony—but minus Jesus! Share these stories with your group. Have a time of thanksgiving afterwards as you are reminded of God’s rescue plan.*

Part 3 **Apply Your Findings**

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead”! The Scriptures said it would be so, and it is so. Eyewitnesses have seen him, and our own lives are proof of it. Christ is risen indeed! So, our faith is not empty, but full and running over! We open the treasure chest to find treasures of every kind! What’s more, we are telling the truth about God. He really is our Redeemer and Lifegiver, the triumphant lover of our souls and our selves. Because Christ has indeed been raised from the dead!

Action Point: It’s letter-writing time! Who needs to hear the announcement: Christ has indeed been raised from the dead! Maybe it’s a friend or family member who needs to hear this for the first time. Maybe it is a discouraged believer. Or maybe you can write a thank you letter to the person who first proclaimed that message to you.

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This is our lifeline.

The literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is a door we must walk through. On the other side of that door is our own hope of resurrection, and much more. As we continue our study of 1 Corinthians 15, we will see more of what lies beyond the door of the Resurrection.



Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:20–34

Based on: The sermon series "Life Line," by Lee Eclov, from PreachingToday.com

Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

Note to Leader: *At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.*

The great American writer John Updike died recently. All his life he vacillated between Christian faith and doubt. However, quite early in his career he wrote a poem for a religious arts festival. The poem was called “Seven Stanzas at Easter.”¹ In it, Updike reveals extraordinary insight into the importance of the bodily resurrection of Christ.

This study of 1 Corinthians 15:20–34 will explore the ways Christ's resurrection opens a door to our new life.

Ice Breaker

Seven Stanzas

Purpose: *To introduce the idea of Jesus' physical, bodily resurrection.*

Activity: *Print up several copies of John Updike's poem “Seven Stanzas at Easter” (one for each person in the group). You can find the text easily by searching for the title online.*

Allow everyone a few minutes to read the poem in silence, then ask for volunteers to read the different stanzas out loud. If your group is used to creative expression, consider passing out pencils and asking participants to write (or draw) their own stanza to accompany Updike's. Otherwise, use the following questions to help group members process the poem:

[Q] *Which stanza is your favorite? Why?*

[Q] *What words strike you most powerfully?*

[Q] *What images does the poem bring to mind?*

[Q] *Do you agree or disagree with the main idea of what Updike wants to say? Why?*

Discussion Starters:

[Q] Have you ever known or heard of anyone who has had a “near death” experience? What were their lives like after these experiences?

[Q] What do you think of when you hear the phrase “new life in Christ”?

[Q] What difference does it make if Christ's resurrection was just a spiritual metaphor instead of a historic event?

[Q] What does Christ's resurrection mean for us, his followers?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: The Resurrection is the door to a re-created humanity.

When Adam sinned, it was like a mutant spiritual-death gene was introduced into his line, and every son or daughter of Adam since then has been infected with sin that dooms us to death. But Jesus, as fully human as we are—as completely Adam-ized—died in our place. As the Son of God he was of infinite value, capable of standing in for all other human beings when he died and rose again. And when he rose from the grave, it was God making an eighth day of creation. Here was a new Adam, a new Father of a new kind of humanity—people immune to the powers of sin and death.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20–22.

[Q] What evidence of Adam's "sin disease" have you seen this week?

[Q] How is Christ's resurrection a kind of "firstfruits" of harvest for us?

[Q] If it's true that Jesus is "a new Adam, a new Father of a new kind of humanity," what can we expect from life as his people?

[Q] The idea of "firstfruits" suggests a festival celebration. What do you have to celebrate after reading these verses?

Teaching Point Two: The Resurrection is the door to the rebellious world set right.

Christ's resurrection is the beginning of the end, from God's point of view. The point of these verses is that Christ's resurrection initiated a sequence of events by which all that is in rebellion against God, including death itself, will finally and forever be brought under God's sovereign authority, thanks to the mighty work of Jesus Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:23–28.

[Q] This is not a time for debate, but state briefly what you believe the Bible teaches about the future and the end of the world?

[Q] How does Christ's resurrection get the ball rolling on "a world set right"?

[Q] What images and emotions do these verses evoke in you? How do they encourage you?

[Q] All of Christ's work happens "so that God may be all in all." What does that mean?

[Q] What steps could you take this week to more clearly reflect that God is "all in all" for you?

***Leader's Note:** First Corinthians 15:29 is a confusing verse about baptism of the dead. Interpreters have disagreed on the meaning of this verse. But whatever it is, Paul does not necessarily approve it in this discourse just because he mentions it.*

Teaching Point Three: Walking through the Resurrection door leads to a new life of dying.

Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow me." We die to ourselves and to the world around us. Christians face persecution and even death.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:30–32.

Paul said, "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:10). But why would you persevere in your faith, why put up with all this dying, self-sacrifice, persecution, and weakness, if there is no resurrection?

The ancient historian Herodotus tells of an Egyptian custom: "In the social meetings among the rich, when the banquet is ended, a servant carries round to the several guests a coffin, in which there is a wooden image of a corpse ... As he shows it to each guest in turn, the servant says, 'Gaze here, and drink and be merry, for when you die, such you will be.'" For us as believers the resurrection means we persevere in our faith because tomorrow matters more than today.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:16–19.

[Q] Do you agree that as believers "tomorrow matters more than today"? Why or why not?

[Q] Paul wrote, "... we endanger ourselves every hour ... I die every day." What did he mean by this?

[Q] In what ways have you suffered for the sake of the faith?

[Q] When do you get discouraged in your faith? Tell about a time you felt that "it's not worth it."

[Q] What, according to this passage, makes the sacrificial life worth it? What specifically about the resurrection reward helps you endure?

Optional Activity

Purpose: *To consider perseverance in the face of difficulty.*

Activity: *Go to opendoorsusa.org or persecution.com, and find out ways you can encourage and help persecuted believers around the world. Consider writing letters or providing Bibles.*

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

John Updike's poem said, "Let us walk through the door." On the other side of the tomb's door is all that God has planned for the world to come, and every reason we need for living as Christians in the world now.

Action Point: *In what specific ways could your life be a sign of God's coming kingdom, where a rebellious world is set right? You might immediately think that means volunteering to help with your church's middle-school youth ministry. That could very well be! It could also mean serving the "alien, fatherless, and widow" in your community. What ministries could use your help? How could you and your small group provide sacrificial, ongoing, relational ministry with your neighbors in these difficult situations?*

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Part 3 Apply Your Findings

John Updike’s poem said, “Let us walk through the door.” On the other side of the tomb’s door is all that God has planned for the world to come, and every reason we need for living as Christians in the world now.

Action Point: In what specific ways could your life be a sign of God’s coming kingdom, where a rebellious world is set right? You might immediately think that means volunteering to help with your church’s middle-school youth ministry. That could very well be! It could also mean serving the “alien, fatherless, and widow” in your community. What ministries could use your help? How could you and your small group provide sacrificial, ongoing, relational ministry with your neighbors in these difficult situations?

—Study by Lee Eclou, with Kyle White

The Resurrection Body Is Built for Heaven

The seeds come up and bloom.

Someone hearing for the first time that the dead will be raised from the grave could easily picture something from a horror movie! Ghastly corpses climbing out of graves. Or maybe zombies, like The Night of the Living Dead. No thank you! I suspect most people imagine immortality, but very few (apart from Christians) imagine the resurrection of our bodies. After all, if these bodies are a pain before we die, they are surely not going to be an asset after we die! Some people, imagining the afterlife, picture themselves with bodies, but aren't completely sure how that body they're imagining will get there. We can find out more in the Bible's most important chapter on the resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15.



Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:35–49

Based on: The sermon series "When the Seeds Come Up," by Lee Eclov, from PreachingToday.com

Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

Note to Leader: *At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.*

Ice Breaker Dress Codes

Purpose: *To introduce the idea of dress codes and standards for entry.*

Activity: *Before the group meeting, read through this [explanation of dress codes from LasVegasRestaurants.com](http://LasVegasRestaurants.com). During the group meeting, explain the different levels of dress to your group members—you can print the article and read excerpts or just summarize. If you really want to make a splash, you can demonstrate the different levels of dress by changing into different outfits.*

Once the basic dress codes have been identified, ask these questions:

- [Q]** *Are you generally in favor or not in favor of dress codes? Why?*
- [Q]** *When have you been asked to abide by a dress code in the past?*
- [Q]** *What other cultural events or rituals require a certain level of dress?*

Conclude the activity by saying, “You may not want to hear this, but heaven has a dress code....”

Among the Christians in the ancient Greek city of Corinth, there were some who could not imagine the resurrection of the body to be a good thing. In verse 35, Paul repeats what he's heard. You have to read this question dripping with skepticism: “But someone may ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?’” They may have been picturing something out of *The Night of the Living Dead*. And Paul's response is, to put it in the vernacular, “That's stupid!”

Paul has already established in this chapter that Jesus Christ literally rose from the dead and appeared to many different people, and that everything we believe as Christians rests on that historical event. Now he turns his attention from Christ's resurrection to our resurrection. What will our bodies be like when they are raised from the dead? Paul is driving toward the statement he makes in verse 50: “I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” In other words, you cannot get into heaven wearing what you're wearing. That old body of yours just will not do! We absolutely must have the resurrected bodies God promises if we want to live in the heavenly kingdom that awaits us.

Discussion Starters:

- [Q] What do you picture our bodies being like when they are raised from the dead?
- [Q] How do you imagine the dead will be raised?
- [Q] How do you think cremation or amputation affect our resurrection bodies?
- [Q] What age do you think we will appear in heaven?
- [Q] And, as long as we are at it, will there be dogs (and other animals) in heaven? The questions just start rolling, don't they?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Our mortal bodies are the seeds of the bodies God will give us.

To understand how the resurrection works, look at what happens when we plant seeds. Imagine a tulip bulb. Is it a tulip? Not exactly. Now imagine a beautiful tulip. Where did it come from? From a bulb. How did that happen? The bulb was planted, and buried in the ground, and then the flower grew from it. Could God just make a tulip without the bulb? Yes, he could, but he doesn't do it that way.

These mortal bodies carry our essence—our souls, our lives—and when these mortal bodies are buried, God draws that essential part of us up into the new bodies he will give us, the way DNA and life flow from the bulb to the flower. You will still be you when God gives you a new body, because he draws the “you” in this mortal seed of your body into the “you” in the immortal flower of your resurrection body.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:36–38.

- [Q] Our earthly bodies are simply a seed for the harvest that our heavenly bodies will be. Why do you think this process is necessary?
- [Q] What do these verses tell you about the God we worship?
- [Q] How do these truths affect your daily life?

Optional Activity

Purpose: *To illustrate and remind us of our hope of resurrection bodies.*

Activity: *Set out some small clay pots, some soil, and some flower seeds (marigolds grow quickly). Take some time to plant them as a group, and perhaps even decorate the clay pots with encouraging verses from 1 Corinthians 15. You can keep the marigold pots in the place your small group meets, and note their growth. When they finally bloom you can have a time of worship together, remembering your future hope, then give the potted flowers to shut-ins or plant them outside as a reminder of God's promises.*

Teaching Point Two: God always creates bodies splendidly suited to their environments.

Look at anything in nature and see how God has perfectly suited it for its environment. Fish can breathe underwater. Bears can sleep through cold winters. Butterflies can fly thousands of miles. When God shapes the bodies you and I as Christians will have in heaven, those bodies, springing from the seed of our earthly bodies, will be perfectly and splendidly suited for that new and extraordinary environment.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:39–41.

[Q] What aspects of God's creation stun you?

[Q] How do you picture heaven?

[Q] What do these verses tell you about God the Creator?

Teaching Point Three: The body they bury will not be like the body God raises.

Our earthly bodies are destined to deteriorate and decay. But as the verse in "Amazing Grace" says, "When we've been there ten thousand years, / Bright shining as the sun, / We've no less days to sing God's praise / Than when we'd first begun."

There's also an old gospel song that says, "Never grow old, never grow old/ In a land where we'll never grow old." Imperishable! Our bodies are "sown in dishonor, [but] raised in glory." Our resurrection bodies will be glorious.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:42–44.

[Q] Which of the following truths about our resurrected bodies is most encouraging to you:

- “The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable” (v. 42)
- “It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory” (v. 43a)
- “It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power” (v. 43b)
- “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (v. 44)

[Q] Why is the truth you picked so encouraging to you?

[Q] What do you think Paul means when he says our bodies will be “raised in glory”?

[Q] What is your reaction to this statement: “The landlord of your new body will be God’s Spirit. You will still have your soul, but it will be God’s Spirit who completely owns and moves you, with your soul as the happy tenant.” True or false? Why?

Teaching Point Four: Christ, the second Adam, guarantees us heaven-ready bodies.

God told Adam, “For dust you are, and to dust you will return.” But it is not so for the Adam from heaven. We do not know what substance that resurrected body is made from, but it is most certainly not dust! And whatever wonderful new matter made up Christ’s body—matter that could pass through walls, yet enjoy food; matter that could walk, yet rise into the air; matter that could take on the disguise of an ordinary man and yet shine like the sun—whatever that matter is, that is what our bodies will be like in heaven. Bodies that are imperishable, glorious, powerful, and breathing with the Spirit of God.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:45–49.

[Q] What can we look forward to according to this passage?

[Q] What promises are here for us?

[Q] In this passage Jesus is referred to as “life-giving spirit” and the “man from heaven.” What comfort or hope do you derive from these titles for your Savior?

[Q] What will you do with this guarantee of a future, heaven-ready body?

Part 3 **Apply Your Findings**

We don't think enough about the bodies God will give us at the resurrection. All we care about is that they won't be *these* bodies! But bodies are important to God. The human body is God's own creation, and he will create for us bodies that are perfectly suited to our heavenly home.

Joni Eareckson Tada, who has lived many years as a quadriplegic, said, "Don't assume that all I ever do is dream about springing out of this wheelchair, jumping up, dancing, kicking, doing aerobics. No, I'm looking forward to heaven because of a new heart, a heart free of sin, sorrow, selfishness. That beats having a new body any day." That surely is wonderful—to think of perfect hearts. But what is so great is that God will give us new, glorious bodies suitable for hearts so righteous!

Action Point: Write a psalm of praise and wonder to God. Consider what he has created, and his upcoming re-creation. Share these psalms in your group. Or when you're alone, sing your psalm to God the Creator.

—Study by Lee Eclov, with Kyle White

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