



Death

To



Life

An Easter Devotional

Daily Devotionals for March 24 – April 6, 2024

Death to Life Easter Devotional

This is a two-week devotional for you to use personally or for your family time. The week leading up to Easter, we will focus on 7 truths for us because of the crucifixion of Christ. From Easter and the week following, we will meditate on 7 truths for us because of the resurrection. We pray this will prompt thoughtful reflection in your personal and family devotional time with the Lord. We hope that this Easter, you will be convinced through the cross and resurrection that Christ brings us from death to life.

— Bryson Jackson

Schedule:

Date	Death: Jesus' crucifixion means...	Text	Writer
3/24/2024	You have seen God's love	Rom 5:8	Bryson J
3/25/2024	You will be saved from God's wrath	Rom 5:9	Michael H.
3/26/2024	You have God's righteousness	2 Cor 5:21	Rachel K.
3/27/2024	Your sins have been forgiven	Eph 1:7	Brent J.
3/28/2024	Your conscience can be clean	Heb 9:14	Cathy L.
3/29/2024	Your sins were put on Christ	1 Pet 2:24	Naomi L
3/30/2024	You've been brought to God	1 Pet 3:18	Alecia R
	Life: Jesus' resurrection means...		
3/31/2024	You have hope that can't die	1 Pet 1:3-4	Bryson J
4/1/2024	Your Savior defeated death	Rom 6:9	Michael H.
4/2/2024	You can live a new life	Rom 6:4	Drew C.
4/3/2024	You must recognize Him as Lord	Rom 14:7-9	Corey T.
4/4/2024	Your faith is not in vain	1 Cor 15:16-20	Skyler J
4/5/2024	You will be with God after death	1 Thes 4:13-14	Sarah G.
4/6/2024	Your Savior is indeed God's son	Rom 1:4	Emma C.

March 24th, 2024

Bryson Jackson

Jesus' crucifixion means you have seen God's love

In 1956, Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators discipleship-focused ministry, went on a water skiing trip at Schroon Lake, NY. He had committed his life to helping others mature in their faith and was a dedicated servant for the kingdom working alongside Billy Graham in the heyday of revivalistic crusades across America. Two hours into their ski trip, he and Allene Beck, a young girl, were thrown from the boat when they hit a wave. Knowing Allene was unable to swim, Trotman got underneath her and pushed her up above the water until the boat could turn back and rescue them. Allene was pulled out of the water but Dawson had already perished below the waves. A tragic accident but a powerful example. At his funeral, Billy Graham made the statement, "Dawson lived to save others." Who does that remind you of?

The ultimate example of sacrificial love was displayed for us through Christ's death on the cross. He showed the unsearchable depths of love within himself by giving up his life on our behalf. And let's be clear, we were not worthy causes. The Bible says, "while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6). In other words, Christ had nothing to gain by dying for you, yet he chose to do it anyway. You do not deserve the lavishness of God's love but it rests on you nonetheless and beckons you to reckon with its absurdity. The Apostle Paul continues in Romans, "God demonstrated his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). The cross stands as the proof of his love and leaves us breathlessly realizing its meaning. His love was the motivation behind him taking our place. Jesus is the greatest example of "living to save others" and his sacrifice at Calvary fully displayed the immeasurable fathoms of his love for us.

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- Who is someone in your life you know loves you?
- How do you know that person loves you?
- What have they done to display that love for you?
- How does Christ's display at the cross prove his love for you?
- How do we show our love to others?
- Are there other passages in the Bible that talk about God's love for us? (John 3, 1 John 4, Romans 8 are some options)
- What are some characteristics of God's love you can find in the Bible?
- Pray together thanking the Lord for his love for us and pray for ways we can love each other more as a family/group.

March 25th, 2024

Michael Hamilton

Jesus' crucifixion means You Will Be Saved From God's Wrath

In the first book of his *Divine Comedy*, Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) imagines himself on a guided tour of hell, commissioned by a friend in heaven concerned for his soul. The people Dante meets as he descends surprise him: they are not only villains, whose deeds are easy for readers to condemn, but also seemingly virtuous churchgoers and accomplished professionals. Everyone in hell experiences the wrath of God for sins they savored, often hid, and almost always rationalized. More surprising is how hell's inhabitants spend eternity. Those who lusted in life whirl around in tornado-like fits of passion. Gluttons eat themselves sick. The greedy and envious work tirelessly at cyclical tasks of their own choosing, forever unsatisfied. Those angry in life rage violently in death. Neighbors who hated each other are frozen in ice together, forever giving each other the cold shoulder, weeping and gnashing their teeth in darkness. Do you see the theme? In hell (as Dante imagines it), people become more of who they already are. No longer enduring people's evil "with much patience" (Rom. 9:22), God finally withdraws the grace that once restrained their evil, so that they are forever their own victims.

Under God's wrath, or justice, each person receives the punishment he deserves—which, it turns out, is what each person spent their life choosing. None but God can comprehend his righteous wrath. But illustrations like Dante's help us understand that, left to our own sinful desires, we would choose our sin over submitting to God's righteous authority and acknowledging his claim on our lives. This is why the apostle Paul described us as "dead in our sins" and "slaves to sin": "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another" (Rom. 6:11; Titus 3:3). Nevertheless, Paul writes, "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). This demonstrated God's love for us and God's wrath toward evil. God did not ignore our sins; he punished them, in Christ. Knowing our punishment to be unbearable for us, God the Son substituted himself for us. His broken body bore the penalty for our every injustice, violence, and lie—for every form of adultery, selfishness, and idolatry—for every wound we would inflict on others. Jesus paid for them all. Because Jesus has already paid this price, God is not only "faithful" to forgive everyone who confesses Christ as Lord—he is "just" to do so (1 John 1:9). Paul continues, "Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God" (Rom. 5:9). Consequently, Christ's followers live free from the shadow of guilt or fear of judgment. Jesus did the impossible work of enduring God's wrath for us. And, as he himself said, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- Do you believe your sins have been fully forgiven in Christ? Do you struggle with letting yourself "off the hook?"
- How has choosing sin in your life harmed you?
- How does God's wrath against sin make him just?
- What would our world look like with no consequences for wrong?
- Why do we need to be saved?
- Many people, especially nonbelievers, characterize the "God of the Old Testament" as wrathful and the "God of the New Testament" as merciful. Does the Bible support this distinction?
- Jesus fully bore the punishment for the sins of those who follow him. Does that mean parents should not punish their children? Is there a difference between "punishment" and "discipline"?

March 27th, 2024

Brent Jackson

Jesus' crucifixion means your sins have been forgiven

Who among us has struggled to forgive someone else? I would say it is almost certainly everyone. The human experience can be filled with cutting words, betrayal, manipulation, deceit, theft, and various kinds of physical harm. When we experience any one of these at the hands of another person, especially if that person is a family member or friend, the impact can be devastating. The last thing we would want at that moment is to show them any sign of love or kindness. In fact, we often feel that they should suffer some consequences. They need to pay for what they did before we would offer them our forgiveness!

Thinking about our emotional reaction to being wronged and how reluctant we often are to offer forgiveness can bring some powerful contrasting perspective as we contemplate the work of Jesus on the cross. In this scenario, WE are the ones who have betrayed, deceived, and harmed, wronging the one who loves us, and yet, He continues to show us love and kindness. Before we even ask, He WANTS to forgive us. Someone DID have to suffer consequences... There WAS a price to be paid before He could forgive... and HE paid it for us.

This is what is being described in Ephesians 1:7 which says, *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace."* Though the faults and failures were all on our side, God made a way to buy us back at the enormous cost of the blood of Christ. If we receive His redemption, we are set free, forgiven, and restored to a right-functioning relationship with God as if we had never done wrong. What a privilege. What a miracle. What a Savior!

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- Can you think of a time when you didn't feel like forgiving someone?
- If the other person hasn't asked for forgiveness, do I still have to forgive?
- What happens when we don't forgive?
- Can you think of a time when you needed to be forgiven?
- What does it feel like to receive forgiveness?
- What role does confession of sin play in our receiving of God's forgiveness? (i.e. 1 John 1:9)
- Knowing that we have received God's miraculous forgiveness, how should we respond?

March 26th, 2024

Rachel Kimble

Jesus' crucifixion means that you have God's righteousness

2 Corinthians 5:21

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

When Jesus died on the cross, he accomplished many glorious things on our behalf. Some of these would include his victory over death, his example of sacrifice, his defeat of Satan. All of these accomplishments won in Christ's death are of great value, however, one aspect of Christ's work that cannot be ignored is the fact that he took our sin upon himself and offers his righteousness to those who believe. The word "imputation" is a theological word that means to ascribe or count righteousness to someone by virtue of righteousness in another. In this case, Jesus had perfect righteousness, that is, he lived perfectly, and that righteousness is credited to our moral accounts by faith in him.

A simple illustration will make this idea clearer. Imagine being a poor college student and knowing that your bank account balance is sitting at \$100. One day you notice that the balance is now at \$2,100. You know that you did not make any deposit or earn any money. The source of that \$2,000 is a mystery but since it is now in your account, the money is yours. As believers we receive Christ's righteousness to our account when we turn to him in repentance and faith for salvation.

This exchange works in this way for a few reasons. First, Jesus was sinless. When he died on the cross, he did not need to pay for his own sins. In fact, Jesus willingly took our sins on himself when he died on the cross (see Isaiah 53). He paid the price we would have owed. We are sinful and could never pay the penalty for our own sins. However, when we trust in Christ alone for salvation, our sin is paid for and we receive the free gift of Christ's righteousness. This is "credited to our account." As we grow in our walk with Christ, we actually start becoming more righteous, but as far as God is concerned the full beauty of Christ's righteousness is already sitting in our account. We are seen by God the Father as clothed in the righteousness of Christ. What a miracle!

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- Have you ever had a debt paid for you? Tell about what happened.
- What is the best gift you have ever received?
- Believer - How does the fact that you already have Christ's righteousness motivate you to live more fully for God?

March 28th, 2024

Cathy Letcher

Jesus' crucifixion means your conscience can be clean

We all strive to have a clear conscience and we definitely know when we don't have one. Sometimes we try to justify, rationalize and talk ourselves into possessing one. Thomas Aquinas said "the conscience is the inner voice we have that either accuses us or excuses us for our actions" and John Frame described it as, "the God-given ability to discern good and evil." Authors Andrew Naselli and J. D. Crowley say that our conscience is a priceless gift of God's common grace to believers and unbelievers alike. It reflects the moral aspect of God's image.

God knows us deeply and intimately since He is the One who fashioned and formed us (Psalm 139). Each one of us is accountable before God and our conscience often makes us aware of our internal guilt. No matter how much we try to distract or ignore, our conscience remains unclean before our Holy God. We are personally responsible to seek Christ and His forgiveness as the only way towards cleansing.

In Hebrews 9, we see the comparison between a human priest and Christ as our High Priest. In the Old Testament, God commanded the high priest to offer sacrifices once a year. The priests went into the Holy Place to offer sacrifices to God so that HE would forgive sin. Yet, these sacrifices were not sufficient, since they would have to be made again the next year. The author of Hebrews contrasts this with Christ's death on the cross. Christ shed His perfect blood to pay for the sins of all mankind once and for all, a permanent sacrifice! Hebrews 9:14, *"how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."* This work gives us the gift of a clear conscience.

This does not mean there is an absence of guilt as much as it is the acknowledgment of personal sin and God's forgiveness of that sin. When we receive this gift, we then are enabled to walk in new life. 2 Corinthians 5:17 states *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come."*

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- How do you define conscience?
- What does it look like to live with a clean conscience because of Jesus?
- What circumstances can affect our conscience? Internal circumstances and external circumstances?
- How does a guilty conscience affect our relationship with God? With our family? With our friends?
- Share an experience where you had a clear conscience?

March 29th, 2024

Naomi Leak

Jesus' crucifixion means your sins were put on Christ

When I was a kid, I used to get sick a lot in the middle of the night. I'd wake up in pain, feeling confused and scared. I didn't know what was happening, why I felt so bad, or what to do about it — I just knew something was wrong with me, and I couldn't fix it.

So I'd roll out of my bed and stumble down the hall, stomach aching and feet dragging on the carpet, straight to my parents' room. Standing by my mom's side of the bed, I'd prod her awake and then unload what was happening, all of my symptoms and worries and sometimes tears.

And then the most wonderful thing would happen. She'd get up and tell me to lie down in her place. I'd climb into her bed while she pulled up the warm covers, wrapping me up and assuring me that she'd go get the medicine I needed, and I could just sleep. She took on all the responsibility for my sickness, all the weight of figuring out what to do. And through her sacrifice, I got to take her place, resting, peaceful, and well.

For me, this is a picture of the gospel. In 1 Peter 2:24 (NIV), Peter tells us *"He [Jesus] himself bore our sins' in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed."*

I think all of us have a sense that there's something wrong with us. We feel guilt over past decisions and the way they've shaped us. We feel weighed down knowing there's some things we've done that we can never make up for. We can't make things right, and we can't even heal ourselves.

But Peter gives us such very good news in this verse: We no longer bear that responsibility. Jesus, in his kindness, knew that we couldn't bear the weight of our own sin. So he lovingly took it from us, bearing the punishment we deserved on the cross and purchasing the healing we need for our souls. Through his sacrifice, he's invited us into his rightful place, one that is at rest and peace with God, one that is a life of righteousness.

I pray that, this Easter, you can rejoice in the fact that Jesus bore your sins, and now you enjoy the blessings of his sacrifice.

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- Can you think of a time someone sacrificed so they could bear a burden for you? How does that help you understand what Jesus did for you?
- Is there anything you often feel guilty about?
- What are some ways you can sacrifice and bear burdens for others to model the gospel for them?
- Pray and thank Jesus for sacrificing and bearing your sin. Spend some time meditating on the blessings he's invited you into in its place.

March 30th, 2024

Alecia Rohrer

Jesus' crucifixion means you've been brought to God

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit - 1 Peter 3:18

In ancient times, people did not have immediate access to the king, much like we couldn't just walk into the White House and introduce ourselves to the president. They had to be brought to the king through a third party, another person who would introduce them and provide the right to have access to this ruler. They could not approach the throne alone.

Likewise, apart from Jesus, we cannot have access to God. Sin separates us from Him (Is. 59:2a). From the beginning of Genesis when we see Adam and Eve choosing to disobey God, they were sent out of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24). They experienced separation from God because of their sin for the first time. Throughout the Old Testament, God instructed His people about sacrifices that needed to be performed by the priests for the sins of the people. A mediator or "an in-between" was necessary to perform this sacrifice and provide access to God for the forgiveness of their sins.

The first half of today's verse (1 Peter 3:18) says that Jesus "*suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous.*" We remembered yesterday on Good Friday how Jesus chose to suffer greatly on the cross for us. He was righteous, the perfect One, and yet He voluntarily died for us, the unrighteous ones. Why? The second half of this verse tells us: "*that He [Jesus] might bring us to God.*" We "*once were far off, [but now] have been brought near by the blood of Christ*" (Eph. 2:13). Through His sacrifice, Jesus is the "third party," the perfect Mediator who presents us to God on His throne as pure and blameless (Col. 1:22; 1 Tim. 2:5).

Tomorrow we'll walk into church to celebrate His resurrection, enjoying the presence of God as we worship Him together. The beauty of 1 Peter 3:18 reminds us that even as we leave the church building and head home, we are not leaving His presence. We have been brought to God. We have constant access to Him through Christ. He will never let us go.

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- If you could be brought and introduced to anyone (real or fictional, past or present), who would it be and why?
- Read Romans 5:2; Ephesians 2:18; and Hebrews 10:19-22. What do these verses show us about the "access" we have to God through Jesus' sacrifice? How can these truths encourage us when we feel "far" from God?
- Spend time in prayer thanking God for the access we have to Him because of Jesus. Ask Him for a greater desire to draw near as Jesus has already brought us to Him through His death on the cross.

March 31st, 2024

Bryson Jackson

Jesus' resurrection means your savior defeated death

What do you place your hope in? During the second half of the 1st century, the burgeoning Christian communities began to receive persecution and endure hardship in ways they had never experienced. Imagine getting fired because your manager found out you were a Christian. Or being beat up and imprisoned because you refused to worship Caesar as a god. The test of your belief in Christ is when you have your material blessings removed by life circumstances. Sweet friendships, a nice family, a good paying job, a comfortable life...these are all easy recipients of our hope unbeknownst to us. Our Christian existence can seem easy when blessings are abounding and we have everything we need. But what happens when these nice things are taken? Following Jesus is never as easy as it may seem.....

The Apostle Peter writes to the Christians experiencing this increase in persecution, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). The grounding of all our hope is found in the resurrection of Jesus. It stands as the stamp of God's approval on the eternal salvation of those who are born again in Christ. Continuing, Peter says we are born, "to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). When you place your hope in Christ, your hope does not die. When you lose a parent or a child, when your spouse gets cancer, when friends you love gossip behind your back, or when you are maligned for making righteous decisions before the Lord, know that your hope is not dead when you trust in Christ. Why? Because Jesus is our living hope who stands as evidence of our ultimate salvation. This Easter, remember the resurrection, not just as a historical event, but as an unwavering ballast of truth that keeps hope eternally alive in the finished work of Christ.

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- What is something you are hoping for in your life?
- Can you think of something you were hoping for that didn't happen?
- How did you deal with losing your hope in something?
- What do you think it would be like to live in a country where being a Christian is illegal? Would it be harder to talk about Jesus?
- Why is Jesus our hope this Easter? Why does his resurrection from the grave give us hope even when we are upset or our life is hard?
- What are three reasons we are thankful for the resurrection?
- Pray and thank the Lord together for the hope he gives us and pray for the Lord to help us place our trust in Him.

April 1, 2024
Michael Hamilton

Jesus' resurrection means you have hope that cannot die

On September 2, 1666, a fire started in a baker's home spread across London, eventually consuming 13,200 houses and 87 churches, including the iconic St. Paul's Cathedral. One of the few statues inside to survive the Great Fire was that of the dean of St. Paul's, John Donne. His statue's victory over the ashes was ironic, considering Donne's favorite subject to write about at the end of his life: Christ's victory over death.

Donne marveled at the paradox that the Son of God died to conquer death so that mankind could live forever. He marveled because he himself was a man of contradictions. Donne began his career as a Catholic, a warrior, and a bureaucrat who scratched out racy poems on the side; he died a gentle Protestant pastor famous for his devout verses. His home was bursting with life, as he and his wife Anne had twelve children—but burying three of those children nearly broke him. A month before his own death in 1631, Donne preached his final sermon, "Death's Duel," about facing death courageously with hope in the resurrection, as Jesus did.

Christ's resurrection on the first Easter was no mere stroke of luck in the battle between good and evil. It was surgical strike on the ultimate threat to human happiness of any kind in this life or the next. So thrilling was the Lord's victory over death that the apostle Paul himself, in writing his letter to the first-century church in Corinth, could not resist paraphrasing the poetry of the prophets Isaiah and Hosea: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55) These biblical writers taunted death as though death were mortal and they were not. About 1,600 years later, Donne followed their example, writing: "Death, be not proud, though some have called thee Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so; . . . One short sleep past, we wake eternally, And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die."

These writers did not minimize the emotional and physical pain death causes—but they did boldly and clearly boast in Christ's victory over death for himself and for all who place their faith in him. And so should we.

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- What are some ways death makes you uncomfortable?
- Revelation 20:14 shows us that death will ultimately perish when Christ returns. How should this influence how we think and feel about death?
- After taunting death, Paul challenged the Corinthians, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58). How does the resurrection prompt our faithfulness?
- Fill in the blank: "Because Christ's victory over death is a victory for all believers, I no longer need to fear _____."

April 2, 2024
Drew Clemens

Jesus' resurrection means you can live a new life

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." - Romans 6:4 (ESV)

On Sunday, we celebrated that Jesus' resurrection gives us a hope that cannot die, and yesterday we celebrated that He defeated death itself. This is good news! The thing humans fear most is death. It has ruled over us since sin entered the world. The fact that Christ has defeated death changes everything. Our greatest fear and curse has been beaten!

But for what? To stand still in that victory? When a warrior stands victorious in battle, does he stay and live on that battlefield? Is he defined by the enemy that he defeated? Of course not. The battle is won for a purpose. The victory is the gateway to something better.

When Jesus defeated death and rose again, He walked away from the battlefield victorious—providing a gateway to new life. A life we were unable to live before. As baptism symbolizes His death, burial, and resurrection, we are now identified by His victory over death and the new life He has enabled for those who follow Him.

There will be times we remember the shadows of that old life. It can be difficult to forget the pain of old battles. But that was our old life. We must never forget that in Christ we have a new life. We are a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). He has won the battle. He leads us off that battlefield of death, leaving it behind, and we live every day now in this new life He has won for us.

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- Why are wars fought and battles won?
 - What are victors able to do after a victory?
- How are we able to have new life?
- Do you think it can be hard for followers of Jesus to remember they are living in a new life?
 - If so, why do you think that is?
 - How can we remind ourselves that our old life is over?
 - How can we remind ourselves that we are in a new life?

April 3, 2024
Corey Thomas

Jesus' resurrection means you must recognize Him as Lord

Jesus paid a heavy price to ransom humanity. During the time of Easter we rightly focus on His death and resurrection. We consider the horrible death and unjust punishment that He endured on our behalf so that we can be made right with God. While this is something that is important for us to reflect on, there is more to the mission of Jesus than His death. Jesus sacrificed Himself for our sake not just in His death, but also in His life. Jesus did not live for Himself during His time on earth or even since His resurrection. Likewise, to be a disciple of Jesus is to make Him the Lord and ruler of your life. There are many people who claim that they would die for Jesus but fewer people who are willing to live for Jesus. To believe in Jesus is to make Him your Lord. As the Lord of your life, there is nothing that He does not have a right to. There is nothing that you own that is not His. Our possessions, our time, our relationships, our energy, our devotion, our life, and our death all belong to Jesus.

As Paul says in Romans 14, all things are under the rulership of Jesus:

"For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." Rom 14:7-9 ESV

We are so blessed to have a Lord and master in Jesus who cares for us enough to do even more for us than we could ever do for Him. He is so good that God has made Him the King over all things. He has offered us eternal life with Him and to be a part of His eternal kingdom even though we don't deserve it and has proven that He is worthy of our faithfulness and allegiance. Jesus is King.

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- What does it mean to say that Jesus is Lord?
- What are ways that Jesus not only died for us but also lived for us?
- Are there other passages that talk about Jesus as Lord or King?
- Are there any areas where I am living life for myself and not for Jesus?
- What does the Apostle Paul mean when he says that Jesus is Lord "both of the dead and of the living"?
- How can I show others that Jesus is my Lord?
- Pray together and thank Jesus for being Lord of all things

April 4, 2024
Skyler Jackson

Jesus' resurrection means your faith is not in vain

In 2009, a very surprising turn of events unraveled on the stage of the VMA Awards. Taylor Swift had been crowned as winner of the "Best Female Music Video." After celebrating, she began giving thanks to all the people to whom she owed her success. All of a sudden, she was abruptly interrupted by a man who announced that she was not the rightful winner! In fact, he claimed that there was another to whom the award belonged. This man, Kanye West, informed the audience that it was actually Mrs. Beyonce Knowles who was due the supreme honor of having "one of the best videos of all time."

Imagine for a second that you lived in a world where Beyonce had gotten up out of her seat and thanked Kanye before politely taking the award out of Taylor's hands and holding it up in victory. It would have been completely inappropriate. But why? Because Kanye did not have the authority to make that judgment.

This example is the antithesis of the argument made by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:16-20. Paul begins with a conditional statement, saying, "For *if* the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And *if* Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. *Then* those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. *If* in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied."

His claim is this: If there is no resurrection, then our faith is useless. If Jesus has not risen from the dead, He is not qualified to raise us from the dead, just as Kanye West was not qualified to give the VMA Award to Beyonce. Yet, in our case, we are not crushed by a false hope. Instead, Paul makes the most wonderful, marvelous, powerful claim in verse 20: "But in fact Christ *has* been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."

We don't live in the fearful world of "if" Jesus was resurrected. He was resurrected. It is for this reason that we can rejoice in knowing that our faith is not in vain.

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- Is there a time when you were made a promise from someone who didn't have the authority to make that promise? How did that leave you feeling?
- How about a time when the one making the promises was trustworthy and qualified? How did that make you feel?
- Are there ways you struggle to believe that Jesus is qualified to save you? How does that affect your faith?
- How can these truths help you persevere when it feels like your faith is weak?
- Pray together as a family to thank the Lord for Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, acknowledging that it gave Jesus the right to be the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep, and rejoice together in the Lord that it is for this reason that your faith is not in vain.

April 5, 2024
Sarah Gump

Jesus' resurrection means you will be with God after death

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

We can cry, we have hope, and we should share. This passage teaches us three things about how to respond to and view death.

First, this implies we grieve. We can grieve. We will grieve. It is okay to grieve. Paul wrote these things as a model for how we should encourage one another. God has given us the people in our life for a reason. He has given them to us for our encouragement, for our sanctification, and for our joy. When death occurs, we should mourn the loss. We should share stories and weep. It is good to acknowledge the gift of one another.

Second, although we do grieve the deaths of our loved ones, we have hope that we will see those who are in Christ again. For those who believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin, death is not the end. It is only temporary. Jesus demonstrated this when He rose from the dead at the resurrection on the third day. Since we have union with Christ, our death and our loved ones' deaths are not the end. When Jesus returns to establish His eternal kingdom, both those who are living and those who have already died will be reunited. They will live with the Lord forevermore. Therefore, we should not fear death, and we do not mourn without hope.

Third, this good news motivates us to share the Gospel with everyone! Jesus rose from the dead and defeated death! This is revolutionary. If someone does not know and believe Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins and rose from the grave defeating death, they do not know what hope is. Those we love, those we dislike, those we live with, those we live beside—we should share the Gospel with everyone!

We can be confident that our future is secure. We will be with God forever after death. The hope of a believer is not wishful thinking. It is blessed assurance!

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- Are you afraid of dying?
- Do you know someone who has died? Share your favorite memory about them.
- Do you believe that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again? How should that change how you live today?

April 6, 2024
Emma Carsey

Jesus' resurrection means your Savior is indeed God's son

"And was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord." - Romans 1:4

Have you ever wondered what life would be like if Spring never arrived? One year, winter never ended and the sun refused to shine. Everything stayed dull and gray. The temperatures never rose. Every morning the grass was frosted and icicles hung from the roof of your home.

Day after day you hoped that color and joy would spring forth, flowers would begin to bloom, you would wake to the sound of the birds chirping, and you'd feel the warm sunshine on your face. But it never happened.

Imagine now that Jesus went through the excruciating pain of being crucified, put to death, and buried. And he never rose from the grave. He stayed in the tomb.

We would have no hope for the future.

But just as the sun's warmth brings new life to the earth in spring, Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning! His resurrection brought hope, joy, and new beginnings to all who believe in Him.

Jesus' resurrection wasn't just a mere resuscitation of his body but a declaration of His divine nature and authority. In that moment, Jesus was revealed in power as the Son of God. The very Spirit of holiness affirmed His identity for all eternity!

Easter reminds us that there is always hope for a brighter tomorrow even in our darkest moments. Just as the flowers bloom and the trees bud in spring, our hearts can bloom with faith, love, and joy because of Jesus' resurrection.

Further meditations and questions for family discussion:

- What significance does Jesus' resurrection hold for us as believers?
- How does knowing that Jesus is the Son of God impact the way we live our lives?
- In what ways does the truth of Romans 1:4 deepen your faith and trust in Jesus as your Savior and Lord?
- How does the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead inspire hope and confidence in our daily lives, knowing that He has conquered death and reigns as our victorious Savior?

Join us on Sunday mornings in April for our
"Asking for a Friend" series where we address questions
that Christians are often afraid to ask out loud.



University Baptist Church

2223 Hanes Road, Beavercreek, OH 45432

contact@ubcbeavercreek.com

937-426-3966