



## Easter Weekend **LEADER** Discussion Guide

Week of 4/17/22

**Icebreaker:** What's your favorite tradition related to Easter, either now or when you were growing up?

**Getting Started:** Read 1 Corinthians 15 as a group...and, yes, it's long! If this is too long for the amount of time you have then you might consider only reading those verses that apply to the questions you're answering. This chapter is certainly worth the time to read all the way through, though!

**1.** Read verses 1-11 where Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gospel message that was first passed on to him. What are the key features or points of this message?

There's so much packed into these verses, but key elements include what's in verses 3-6. It's worth pointing out as well how this was "in accordance with the Scriptures," meaning that these events were ordained by God and foretold before they happened. It's also noteworthy that Paul received this message and then passed it along, meaning that there was already an essential and controlled message that was being communicated in the early church. In other words, it wasn't "the telephone game" where people were embellishing or misrepresenting a story!

*Application:* Paul claims that the risen Jesus appeared to over 500 people at one time, and many of them were still alive when he wrote this letter in the mid-50s AD! How could this simple (yet amazing) fact encourage your faith and embolden your witness to others?

There's great significance in the fact that James and Paul didn't even believe that Jesus was the Son of God until they encountered him in his resurrected form. It's also amazing that Jesus would appear to so many at once. Since many were still alive when Paul wrote this, it's as if Paul is saying, "But don't just take my word for it...go ask them." It has been pointed out by apologists that this is a strong response to people who try to make the case that Jesus' followers merely had visions or hallucinations of him being alive. While hallucinations can occur on an individual level or perhaps

even in small numbers, they are unheard of among large groups. (See J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity*).

**2.** Paul recounts how the risen Jesus appeared to James and to himself (two skeptics) plus to the apostles. History tells us that some of these same men were martyred for their belief in Jesus. How could their willingness to face execution increase our confidence that Jesus really was resurrected?

The simple case has been made that, “People do not die for something they know is not true” (See Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*). It’s not uncommon for people to die for something they think is true, but people do not die for something they know is not true. The disciples and James and Paul were willing to die because they were convinced Jesus really was resurrected. If they were making it up, they surely would have given up on the lie as they faced the executioner.

*Application:* What kind of costs are associated with believing in Jesus’ resurrection today?

We shouldn’t forget that people still face death today in some parts of the world. People face other extreme forms of persecution as well, such as imprisonment, torture, disowning by loved ones, etc. For us, though, we have the immense privilege of being able to be open about our faith even though we could still face disapproval from others, mocking, and potential school and workplace/career consequences. Our society has seemed to shift to a greater hostility to Christian faith in recent years; however, we are still far away from the kind of consequences many of our brothers and sisters in Christ have faced.

**3.** Paul explains what’s at stake with the resurrection in verses 12-34. What would be the consequence if the resurrection never happened?

Verses 13-19 are key here. These verses should help us put the resurrection into its proper perspective. It’s not a peripheral detail of our faith by any means! It’s the very core of our faith.

*Application:* According to these verses, if you’re a Christian, how should the resurrection be a source of hope to us as we go through the ups and downs of this life?

Here are a few ways to think through this. First, the resurrection gives us hope in the fact that Christ is the “firstfruits” (v. 23) of what we will one day experience. Second, it tells us that Christ is waging a battle against “every rule and every authority and power” opposed to God, including death (vv. 24-26). Third, it also gives us hope to endure in a world that opposes God. Paul mentions some examples of ways believers, including himself, face hardship in this life. Verse 29 is famously difficult. It may indicate that there was some form of vicarious baptism taking place in Corinth, but it does not necessarily imply that Paul is approving of it as much as he is simply referring to it as something people are doing because of their belief in the

resurrection. The argument would then be, “If the resurrection isn’t real then why are these people doing this?” It could also mean that people were becoming believers (i.e., “being baptized”) in order to be present in eternity with loved ones who had died and who were believers. Ultimately, we should be willing to say that it’s a difficult verse to understand!

**4.** Verses 35-49 compare our bodies in this life with those in the life to come. What distinctions is Paul making between these two types of bodies? Verses 42-44 might be most straightforward. We can sometimes think of “spirit” or “spiritual” as being non-physical; however, that’s not what we should think here. The body we will have will be like the body Christ had—the “firstfruits.” The resurrected body will have a greater glory and incorruptibility than what our present bodies offer.

*Application:* How could these verses help us adopt a more hopeful perspective as we go through the aging process or health problems? The wrinkles, hair loss, joint problems, aches and pains, vision and hearing losses, cognitive decline, illnesses, diseases, etc. catch up to all of us eventually. The truth is, though, that our best physique awaits on the other side of this physical decline!

**5.** Verses 50-58 describe victory! What link do you see here between Jesus’ resurrection and victory for the person who follows Jesus? Let these verses soak in a bit. Verses 50-54 continue the contrast between our bodies now and our future bodies, but Paul adds in the element of victory over death. The resurrection hope is a bold, even defiant, declaration of victory...in spite of present appearances.

*Application:* What do you think it looks like for us to live lives of victory as Paul describes in this chapter? What area(s) of your life are in need of a reminder that we have ultimate victory in Jesus? This isn’t “health-and-wealth” prosperity gospel, but an eyes-wide-open acknowledgment of this life’s troubles. The resurrection has recast everything so that we know the final result in spite of the difficulty of the present. Verse 58 is the “So what?” application and you could spend some time discussing it with your group.

*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 Corinthians 15:58*