

# The Resurrection & The End

I Corinthians 15-16 | Week Eleven

## Overview

The goal of the Fellowship is to create connections leading to authentic community, and provide biblical perspective on becoming a Christian scholar. Therefore, be sure to take time to hear from each other (15 minutes), review the lesson (30 minutes) and to pray for personal concerns and campus outreach efforts (15 minutes). Encourage participants to read the chapter in advance, using it for personal devotionals, reflecting on the Memory Verse and journaling insights from your Quiet Time. Try to connect with others outside of the Fellowship this week.

## Where We Are Now

In our previous lesson we looked at the role of spiritual gifts. Building up the church is the purpose of the spiritual gifts, but the gifts are to be expressed under the umbrella of Christian love, not selfishly. Peace, order, and spiritual maturity should be present in our worship, not disorder, confusion, and immaturity.

## This Week

This week the lesson is primarily about the centrality of resurrection in relation to Christianity. Paul first emphasizes the importance of the resurrection of Christ to the gospel, then addresses some issues about our own resurrection and resurrection bodies. Finally, Paul offers his closing exhortations and greetings.

## The Big Idea

The truth of Christianity rests on the reality of the resurrection of Christ. If the resurrection did not happen, then our faith lacks foundation.

## Memory Verse | Cor. 15:58

## Looking at the Text

**Ask someone to read I Corinthians 15:1-11** - *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 11 Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*

1. What key facts about the gospel do these verses provide?

- 1 | The Problem with Knowledge
- 2 | Wisdom of Man & Power of God
- 3 | Servanthood & Stewardship
- 4 | Sex, Holiness, & Worship
- 5 | Singleness, Marriage, & Calling
- 6 | Knowledge, Idolatry, & Surrender
- 7 | The Anatomy of an Idol
- 8 | All in the Family
- 9 | It's All About Love
- 10 | Spiritual Gifts & The Church
- 11 | The Resurrection & The End

### Get Started

Open up the session by asking someone to pray. This will help break the ice and get everyone in the practice of listening to each other.

### Don't Forget

Before you start calling on people to read Scripture or pray, make sure the individual you are calling on is comfortable with the task. You never want to put someone on the spot!

All provided Scripture quotations are in the English Standard Version.

“The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead is the foundation upon which the Christian faith is built. Without the resurrection, there would have been no Christian faith, and the most dynamic movement in history would never have come to be.” -J.P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City*

Christ died for our sins, he was buried, he rose again, and many people saw him alive after his crucifixion.

**Ask someone to read I Corinthians 15:12-34** - *Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. 29 Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? 30 Why are we in danger every hour? 31 I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! 32 What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." 33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." 34 Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.*

2. If Christ did not rise from the dead, what are some of the consequences that Paul underscores?

Our faith is hopeless and we are still in our sins. Christians who have died have perished, instead of entering into the hope that Christ offers.

3. Verse 26 says, "The last enemy to be destroyed is death." How can we trust that Christ will ultimately destroy death? On what basis can we trust and hope that we, too, will overcome death?

Because Christ himself overcame death via his resurrection, we, too, can trust in his power to destroy death and raise us up as well. The reality of Christ's own resurrection demonstrates that he can fulfill his promises to us.

Take 5 minutes to watch; <http://vimeo.com/4316077>

**Ask one or two people to read I Corinthians 15:35-58** - *But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" 36 You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. 38 But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. 39 For not all flesh is the*

## Think About It

### Illustrate It

"The empty tomb, as an enduring symbol of the resurrection, is the ultimate representation of Jesus' claim to being God. The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15: 17 that the resurrection is at the very core of the Christian faith ... Theologian Gerald O'Collins put it this way: 'In a profound sense, Christianity without the resurrection is not simply Christianity without its final chapter. It is not Christianity at all.' The resurrection is the supreme vindication of Jesus' divine identity and his inspired teaching. It's the proof of his triumph over sin and death. It's the foreshadowing of the resurrection of his followers. It's the basis of Christian hope. It's the miracle of all miracles." (Lee Strobel, *The Case for Easter*)

Why is the resurrection of Jesus so critical to Christianity? If the resurrection of Christ did not happen, what impact would that have on Christianity? On your faith?

### Tips for a Better Discussion

Reading about the resurrection of Christ is a good time to discuss presuppositions and how they influence our beliefs. People who deny God and anything supernatural presuppose that only the physical, material world exists. If they approach Christianity from this viewpoint, then they will quickly dismiss supernatural events like the resurrection. But why should anyone presuppose that the material world is all that exists? If God exists and is personal, then he may act in his creation via miracles. Discuss presuppositions and how they influence our thoughts and ideas about reality, including belief and unbelief in the supernatural.

same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. **40** There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. **41** There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. **42** So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. **43** It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. **44** It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. **45** Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. **46** But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. **47** The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. **48** As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. **49** Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. **50** I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. **51** Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, **52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. **53** For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. **54** When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” **55** “O death, where is your victory? O death, where 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 beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

4. In verses 50-58 Paul speaks of our eternal inheritance and the “mystery.” What is the mystery? How does this promise motivate us to live with purpose?

Paul gives insights on our resurrection body. The mystery is how our spiritual body will be transformed by God. Upon Christ’s return, Christians will receive new, spiritual bodies. We look forward to this day because it will mean the incredible transformation of our current, perishable bodies into something far more wonderful—an end to the sin and suffering that we all experience and an eternity in God’s presence because of Christ’s death and resurrection.

One of the first verses I ever memorized was I Cor 15:58. I was part of a close community of believers who were committed to evangelism and discipleship in our workplace which was often hostile and ridiculed us for our faith. We regularly ate together and shared the stories of struggle and success. We always rejoiced in our circumstances, reciting this verse to each other and clinging to the promise that He would insure that our “toil was not in vain.” Paul closes this book with the list of saints who have contributed to the growth of this struggling church and urges them to honor their teachers, share with each other, stand strong, and act in love!

Take a moment and pray for each other to stand firm in their walk and mission.

#### Objections to the Resurrection:

Skeptics offer several objections to the resurrection of Christ, but do their arguments hold up? Was the body of Jesus stolen? Were alleged appearances of Jesus after his death nothing more than mass hallucinations? Were the disciples lying? There’s no motive for the stealing of the body of Jesus. If the disciples stole it, then they all died for what they knew was a lie, but this doesn’t make a lot of sense. Hundreds of people saw Jesus alive after his resurrection, including Paul, who was strongly opposed to Christianity. It doesn’t make sense that hundreds of people all hallucinated. The character of the disciples demonstrates that they highly valued virtue and truth. They had no reason to lie about seeing the risen Christ. All it got them was trouble and, ultimately, death.

#### **Tie It Together**

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 offers important advice to any Christian. Verse 13 calls us to “be watchful” and to “stand firm in the faith.” In light of the many attacks on the Christian faith in our day, it’s important that we see hope in the resurrection of Christ and allow it to encourage and strengthen us to face whatever comes our way. In addition, verse 14 reiterates the theme of 1 Corinthians 13. Love is key to living the Christian life, but it must be genuine love that is selfless and rooted in God. With hope in Christ and love that is focused on God, we, too, may rejoice, as Paul did, and join him in exclaiming, “Our Lord, come!”