



Parkway Fellowship

1 Corinthians: Practical Advice to a Divided Church • Why the Resurrection Changes Everything •
1 Corinthians 15:1-19 • 04/21/2019

Main Point

Easter changes everything. Because Christ has risen, we have purpose, grace, and hope that can never be taken away.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is one key event that has shaped who you are today?

Have you ever thought about what your life would be like if that had never happened? What would be different?

Think about it in terms of Jesus' resurrection. If you had only one sentence to explain the significance of Jesus' resurrection, how would you do it?

What are some of the things that would be different about both history and your own life if Jesus had not risen from the dead?

There are points of divergence in all our lives that shape who we are. These key events force us down a certain path, but what would it have been like if that event had never happened? Imagine how different your life would be without that event, now compound that difference to think about the impact of Jesus' resurrection. No event in human history has had more impact. For us today, because Christ has risen, we have purpose, grace, and hope that can never be taken away.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-8.

Why do you think Paul took the time to remind the Corinthians of the gospel? How did he describe the impact of the gospel?

In verses 3-4 Paul claimed Christ's actions were "in accordance with the Scriptures"? Why is this fact so important?

Before Paul took the time to defend the historical reality of the resurrection, he reminded the Corinthians what was at stake: the gospel. It has been said that 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 is one of the earliest statements of faith. These two verses contain the essence of the gospel. Christ died for sins. He was buried. He was alive on the third day. This is not a secondary or ancillary message, but the very core of Christian faith. The only matter of first importance.

Why do you think Paul recorded all of these witnesses to the resurrection? What was he trying to show in doing so?

A witness is defined as "a person who sees an event." How are we witnesses to Christ's resurrection?

When Christ rose from the grave, He did not simply ascend to heaven, but stayed and spent time with people. The point Paul was making is that the resurrection really happened. It is more than a good story; it is a fact. Jesus appeared bodily to living witnesses. At the time of this letter, the Corinthians would have been able to meet someone who saw the resurrected Jesus because most of them were still alive!

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-19; 32.

Why, according to these verses, does disbelieving Easter mean removing hope? How specifically does the resurrection of Jesus give you hope?

How does taking away the resurrection mean that forgiveness and resurrection are also taken away?

If Jesus was not raised from the dead, then what can we conclude about His life?

The resurrection is the stamp of approval on the life and death of Jesus; it validates the authenticity of His claims. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, it means that we cannot trust the rest of what He said either. But because He was raised, we can know that everything He taught is trustworthy.

How can Paul claim that without the resurrection, Christians are the most pitiable people of all?

What implications does that statement have about the way a Christian should rightly live?

The true Christian life is one of sacrifice and often loss. But this loss is counted as joy because of the promise of what is to come. But if Jesus wasn't raised, then it means we won't be either, and we have nothing to look forward to. Paul's argument was simple—in order for the Christian life to be worth it, there must be something else. But because He is alive, that hope, meaning, and purpose can never be taken away.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How is the resurrection framing your meaning and purpose in life right now?

What specific situation do you need to look on with hope because of the resurrection of Jesus?

How are you going to remind yourself, beyond Easter, of the gospel—that which is of first importance?

Pray

Thank God for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Pray that we would live with a keen awareness that Jesus is alive, and that this knowledge and belief would impact everything about the rest of our lives.

Commentary

| 1 Corinthians 15:1-19

15:1. Paul appealed once again to the Corinthians as brothers as he began to talk about the resurrection. By this affectionate term Paul affirmed the Corinthians in their basic commitments to Christ's resurrection, wanting to remind them of the elements of the gospel, not to challenge their acceptance of it.

15:2. Anticipating the importance of what he would say about the resurrection, Paul made it clear that anyone who did not hold to the gospel he had preached could not be saved. Only by this gospel could they be saved from God's judgment. Salvation comes through belief in the good news of Christ's death and resurrection.

Yet, Paul added an important qualification. They are saved, if they hold firmly to the word. As he indicated throughout this epistle, Paul believed that saving faith would set itself apart from insincerity through time. True believers persevere in their commitments to Christ. Paul did not mean that truly regenerate people could lose their salvation, nor that truly regenerate people were without sin and failure. He understood, as the entire Bible teaches, that saving faith proves itself over a lifetime.

15:3-4. Paul next explained why it was important for the Corinthians to believe his teaching about the resurrection. He justified his insistence that they hold fast to the gospel, insisting that the resurrection was

central to the gospel message. Why was this so important? Why was the resurrection a necessary element of the gospel?

First, Paul received and passed on this gospel. In rabbinic Judaism this terminology described the transmission of authoritative religious teachings. Paul told the Corinthians to maintain the gospel as he had given it to them because it was a sacred tradition, not a human tradition.

Second, he delivered this gospel teaching as a matter of first importance. In other words, nothing was more central or more important in Paul's conception of gospel than these teachings.

Paul summed up his gospel as having two main concerns: the death and the resurrection of Christ. Both of these took place according to the Scriptures. Paul repeated this phrase to emphasize the importance of the scriptural witness and to demonstrate that the resurrection's importance paralleled the centrality of Christ's death.

15:5-8. Paul continued by adding a third element that expanded the second. Christ was not simply raised from the dead. He also appeared; people saw and heard Him. Paul did not repeat the refrain "according to the Scriptures" here because no particular prophecy focused on appearances of the resurrected Son of David. But Paul did note that several people saw the resurrected Christ. These included Peter, the Twelve, more than five hundred of the brothers ... most of whom were still living, James, all the apostles, and Paul himself.

Although Paul's main idea was that all of these people bore witness to the resurrection of Christ, his list had at least three major concerns. Christ appeared to: (1) figures of central authority in the church (Peter, the Twelve, James, all the apostles); (2) large numbers of people (Twelve, five hundred, all the apostles); and (3) to Paul himself.

15:12. Though it is uncertain what caused some Corinthian believers to deny the resurrection of the dead, Greeks viewed bodily death as final, with some saying the spirit survived disembodied. This view likely influenced the church at Corinth.

15:13-15. If Christ were not raised, then apostolic preaching of the resurrection was without foundation, the Corinthians' faith was void, and the apostles were false witnesses. Faith here refers to the content of the gospel message, and is synonymous with "system of beliefs."

15:16. A restatement, in reverse order, of the implications of the Corinthian skepticism regarding resurrection.

15:19. Christians should be pitied more than anyone if there is no resurrection, for in that case we have placed all our hopes in a falsehood. Christianity is fundamentally a resurrection faith.