



## Asking for a Friend – Did the Resurrection Really Happen? Leader Guide

**There are major questions surrounding the Resurrection of Jesus – did it happen? If so, how did it happen? – and rightfully so. Everything Christians believe hinges on the reality of the Resurrection. Why is the Resurrection of Jesus the basis of the Christian faith?**

The Apostle Paul answers this question better than anyone – *14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.* (1 Corinthians 15:14-19 NIV) If the Resurrection didn't happen, then nothing we say, do, teach, or believe matters because it is based on a false premise. If Jesus didn't really resurrect from the dead then He is NOT the Messiah, He was NOT able to forgive sin, and He is not the Son of God. In the Resurrection we see Jesus' claim to be the Son of God // Son of Man // Messiah fulfilled; we see the prophecies and promise of the OT fulfilled (specifically Genesis 3:15); and we see sin and death conquered once and for all. The Resurrection is the validity statement of all Jesus claimed, all Jesus did, and ultimately the true revelation of the glory, power, and love of God.

**People who are skeptical of the Resurrection of Jesus tend to hold to one of two main theories – 1) the body was stolen 2) Jesus never died (swoon theory). What are some of the issues/shortcomings with both of these claims?**

Problems with:

**1) Body was stolen** – no conspiracy theory can grow that large, at some point in time someone talks. The disciples (and other followers) ended up dying for what they believed they saw, not simply what they believed. Many people die for what they believe (Soldiers, religious activists, terrorists, etc.), but this was different. The disciples died for something they saw and believed to be true. If the body were stolen, they would have all died for a lie. People don't die for what they know to be a lie.

Also, the question arises – were the disciples even capable of that type of covert operation? Did they really go from being scared fishermen to black ops operators who were able to surpass Roman guard?

History teaches us that once a leader of a movement is killed (the head of a snake is cut off) then eventually the movement dies. Since Jesus' death, Christianity has done nothing but gain momentum. If He were truly still dead, and the body was simply stolen, the movement would have died.

**2) Swoon theory** (Jesus just passed out) – there are lots of issues with this theory. First of all, no one survives Roman crucifixion, no one. (We discuss this in this week's message // if you're discussing this prior to the message, you can reference our Famous Last Series message – "My God, My God" on our website to hear more about the crucifixion process.) Not just from the excruciating nature of the death, but also if someone survived the crucifixion then the soldiers who crucified him would then be crucified. The death rate was 100%.

John recorded an important medical detail in his gospel that he didn't even realize was important at the time – <sup>33</sup> *But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.* <sup>34</sup> *Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.* (John 19:33-34 NIV) Modern medicine has proven that when someone dies their bodily fluids begin to separate into blood and water (more specifically pericardial effusion and pleural effusion). John had no clue of this fact at the time of the recording, but it proves that medically Jesus was dead.

Another part of the story that shows Jesus was truly dead before He was removed from the cross is the omission of His legs being broken by the soldiers. If someone was still alive on the cross before he was taken down, the soldiers would break his legs to speed up the death process. Jesus' legs were never broken (one reason – to fulfill prophecy) because He was already dead.

**Christians believe that Jesus truly did Resurrect from the dead, but not just based on blind hope – based on evidence and eyewitness accounts. What evidence do we see in the New Testament and history that points us to the validity of the Resurrection?**

The eyewitness accounts of Jesus' (estimated 10) appearances to hundreds of people during the 40 days after His death.

The ever-growing momentum of Christianity and the story of Jesus.

**The change in some of Jesus followers:**

- **Peter** – he went from a scared fisherman who denied Jesus 3 times on the night of His arrest to the first leader of the Church (see Acts 2:14-41), someone who stood in the face of those who crucified Jesus and preached the gospel (see Acts 4:1-20), and eventually gave his life as a martyr
- **James** – this is Jesus' ½ brother. He most likely one of the original ones who ran Jesus out of town when He first started to claim that He was God – and rightfully so! We would do the same if our brother claimed to be God. But something changed in James because he eventually claimed Jesus as His Lord. What caused this change? One word – Resurrection.

- **Paul** – who was actually formerly known as Saul. Before Saul encountered the Resurrected Jesus (and changed his name to Paul), he was one of the fiercest Christian killers the world has ever seen. But something changed. He all of a sudden went from killing Christians, to being possibly the most influential Christian ever. Why? What can cause someone to change like that? One word – Resurrection.

**Everything Christians believe is hinged on the validity of the Resurrection. The evidence points us to validity, eyewitness accounts point us to validity, life change in key characters points us to validity. What is holding you back from believing the Resurrection really happened?**

Leaders feel free to share your own doubts that you've worked through. Please make sure your group members have the time and space to wrestle through their questions and doubts.

**If the Resurrection really happened then it changes everything and anything is possible. What change have you seen the Resurrection make in your life? What “anything” do you need to become possible in your life? What hope does the Resurrection give you?**

Share your story! Make it as personal as possible. Really dive into the thought of “what is possible” if the Resurrection really happened.

#### **Leader Resources**

- *Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel
- *The Resurrection of the Son of God* by NT Wright
- *The Jesus Inquest* by Charles Foster