
IT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

STUDY NOTES FOR CARE GROUPS

The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, April 4, 2010, by Dr Arnold Wong at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available online at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.

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There are many aspects of the Christian faith which are admired and respected by a lot of people who are not Christians. The idea that God is love is a welcome truth, even though it is taught only in the Bible. There is the idea that we are all one family of mankind and that we are related to each other and share human life together.

Then there is the idea that there is forgiveness of sins, and a release from guilt. All these ideas which are so central to Christian faith are welcomed by many, even though they might not come to church.

But the one thing that people most often stumble over is this suggestion that Jesus actually did rise from the dead. What difference does it make? Everyone in the world is affected by the resurrection of Jesus. Nobody can live unchanged by that great fact.

1. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS IMPORTANT TO WHO CHRIST IS AND WHAT HE DOES. MATT. 17:22-23

The colt was an important symbol of our Lord's overall plan to officially present himself to the nation not only as the Messiah-King, but also as their prophetically promised Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). He would also fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, as we will see in a moment. But keep in mind that while Jesus was preparing to present himself to the nation as the long-awaited King of Israel and Savior of mankind, the chief priests were preparing to take counsel to seize and kill him (John 12:13).

IF CHRIST HAD NOT RISEN FROM THE GRAVE HE WOULD BE A LIAR.

If this is the case, then all wonderful writings which many people have appreciated in the New Testament must be thrown aside -- the Sermon on the Mount, for instance. After all, it says things which are contrary to the way we naturally think. It exalts and highly values principles which most people think are unworkable.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead we would really have to eliminate the New Testament entirely. You can't take just a part of it and say, "This I'll accept, but the rest I won't," because it all hangs on the fact that Jesus was who he said he was and could do what he said he did. And if he didn't rise from the dead, that is not true. And if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then, of course, we really don't have any hope beyond this life.

IF CHRIST HAD NOT RISEN FROM THE GRAVE HE WOULD NOT BE ALIVE TO CARRY ON IMPORTANT MINISTRIES.

Read John 14:1-3; Heb. 4:14-16; 1. Peter 2:25 These represent a few of the ongoing ministries of Jesus. Discuss these and other ministries of Jesus. And reflect on the fact that if the Resurrection was false then all of these ministries would be invalid.

2. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS IMPORTANT TO THE GOSPEL—I COR.15:1-8

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, we do not have any hope. In fact, Paul says so: "We are of all men most miserable," (1 Corinthians 15:19). We don't have any hope beyond the grave; we are just kidding ourselves if we think there is anything else.

Furthermore, we don't have any release from guilt and fear. Forgiveness of sin is a meaningless expression. And if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, there is no way we can change it. We are locked into our sinful humanity, and there is no way out.

THE RESURRECTION AFFIRMS WHO CHRIST IS.

If Jesus rose from the dead, as the Bible says, and there is one who has come back and told us what lies beyond, if Jesus did break the bonds of death and come out of the tomb on that first resurrection morning, and if all the simple story which is so artlessly told in the Scriptures is true, if it really happened, then what does it mean? It means that Jesus is still alive. He is still around, still available.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT HE DIED?

There were eye witnesses to his death. There were the actions of the soldiers. Those who were his disciples treated him as one who died. They were preparing Him for burial.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT HE AROSE?

The body was not there. If his enemies took the body they could have produced it showing that it was all a lie. They did not. Friends could not steal the body because there were guards and the huge stone guarding the entrance.

3. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS IMPORTANT TO YOU—I COR.15-13-19; I THESS. 4:13-18

IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE THE RESURRECTION YOU WOULD ONLY HAVE AN EMPTY FAITH

If Jesus rose from the dead, he is still around, still available. He still can meet us in the same way. His promises, which he uttered, are valid promises:

"Come unto me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," (Matthew 11:28).

"He who follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life," (John 8:12b).

"I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture," (John 10:9).

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid," (John 14:27).

"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," (John 16:33b).

- DISCUSS HOW THESE PROMISES AFFECT YOUR LIVING AS A CHRISTIAN IN A HOSTILE WORLD.

IF THERE IS NO RESURRECTION, THERE WILL BE NO REUNION WITH JESUS.

That is what the resurrection of Jesus means. It means that the grave is not the end of the road; death does not have the last word. As Paul put it, "To depart and to be with Christ is far better," (Philippians 1:23b).

This isn't just a faint and glimmering hope for Christians. That isn't merely something nice we say when we get close to death, it is a positive certainty that reside in the heart of every believer. Jesus rose from the dead, and his words have meaning and validity in our lives. And he has promised, "Because I live, you shall live also," (John 14:19).

If we begin to live in the power of Jesus' resurrection which God has set as the basis of life, we will learn to live in the world. When we live in Resurrection power we discover that the world passes away but he who does the will of God abides forever. (Read 1 John 2:17).