

BEYOND *Easter*

April 3 & 4

Overview

Of everything that goes BEYOND in the Christian life, probably nothing is as significant as all that is BEYOND Easter. We will be looking at the central events of the Christian faith and how they affect our lives today.

Goals of the study guide:

- To look at the resurrection of Jesus Christ and see how it affects our past, our present and our future.
- To realize that it is easy to miss spiritual realities that are right in front of us.
- To see how each one of us can be impacted today by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Key points:

- Dwelling on the past can keep us from seeing the reality of the present that is right in front of us.
- It is easy to get so comfortable with some things in our world that we miss the powerful truth that they contain.
- The Easter message gives us release from guilt, hope in death and purpose in life.



Take a second look ... Sermon Summary

On the Sunday after Jesus died, two despondent disciples of Jesus slowly walked toward Emmaus. They had hoped that Jesus was the Messiah who would redeem Israel. They had quit their jobs to follow Him.

But now He was dead. They had seen Jesus' body buried in a tomb. He had been defeated.

As they walked these seven miles from Jerusalem, they met a stranger who turned their grief into joy. Let's discuss their experience so that we can find a joy that is greater than our deepest fear and hurt.

1. *Dwelling on the past.* (Luke 24:13-24)

When you hurt deeply enough, it's tough to move on. How do you know if you're in grief?

- By what you *do*.
- By what you *say*.
- By how you *look*.
- By how you *respond*.

With drugs, divorce, alcoholism, terrorism, eroding values, economy, cancer and many seemingly unsolvable problems in our day, there is a sense of helplessness among us. "We had hoped" is a sad expression, but it is common in 2010. These two men were down because they were dwelling on the past.

2. *Missing the present.* (Luke 24:25-27)

Did you know that you can get so used to something that you don't notice it anymore? The same thing is true spiritually. How many times have you sung "Amazing Grace"? Have you ever sung a song without paying attention to the words? How many times have you heard the Easter story? Does the message still move you?

Sometimes a new voice can help us see what we've been missing. A new member in your Bible study may ask questions about things you've taken for granted or your basic beliefs are challenged. You feel so guilty, you're convicted by a stranger. You may wish he'd go home. He disturbs your routine and forces you to see what you've not seen before.

We need to be alert and teachable, because then our feeling of grief can turn into joy.

3. *Seizing the future.* (Luke 24:28-35)

Even though they were enamored with Jesus, He acted as if He was going to keep traveling. The Lord does not force His way into our lives. He stands at the door and knocks, but we must invite Him to come in.

- They *learned* from the *past*.

Why is it that we usually learn more looking back than we do in the present? It's great to look back at the past and see the positive, but it's even better to catch a special moment while it's happening.

- They *appreciated* the *present*.

When you understand that Jesus has really conquered death, you want to be with people who share your faith. Nobody has to beg you to attend church. You appreciate what you have and you want to celebrate!

- They *looked* to the *future*.

The gospel of Jesus Christ meets our three primary needs:

1. Release from *guilt*.
2. Hope in *death*.
3. Purpose in *life*.

His presence in our daily lives gives us direction ... our present life is empowered! And when you understand that, then you understand that there is meaning and purpose in life. *John 11:25-27*



Take it to the source ... Bible Study

Introductory question: What is your favorite story or movie about a hero who keeps himself hidden or disguised until the climactic moment? Why do you like that particular story?

Opening thought:

In this event that happened on the way to Emmaus, Christ is portrayed as mysterious, almost hidden. Often that is the way He comes to us—in a form or way that we do not expect. Use this question and discussion to get your group thinking about the way Christ appeared to the couple on the road to Emmaus and how He comes to us.

Read *Luke 24:13-24*

1. How do you handle situations where what you expected to happen is replaced by something totally unexpected and disappointing? How do you deal with the disappointment?
2. What do you think kept the travelers from recognizing Jesus?
3. Do you ever have trouble recognizing the reality that is right in front of you in a particular situation? What might cause your perception to be distorted or confused?
4. Why is disappointed hope such a strong force in a person's life? How can the message of Jesus Christ be presented to encourage someone who is hopeless and feels helpless?

Key points:

- Handling unexpected disappointment is one of the difficult parts of life. People often get negative, isolated and depressed.
- When a person is self-consumed or full of self-pity, their vision of reality can become distorted. They ignore other people and even miss things that are happening right in front of them. It is always important to step back and take a look at the big picture. Prayer is a great way to get God's perspective on things that are going on in our lives.
- Many things in life will eventually disappoint us. The message of Jesus Christ is that nothing can hold Him down, not even death. Because of that, He is a source of certainty, stability and hope for every person who trusts in Him.

Read Luke 24:25-27 and Matthew 16:21.

1. How important is studying the Bible when it comes to shaping your view of reality? Why should it be important?
2. Have you ever had a time when your own perspective on something caused you to miss seeing God's guidance or truth? How did it impact you? What did you learn from the situation?
3. What do these verses teach us about remembering things that God has shown us in the past?
4. What practical things can you do to help you remember lessons God has taught you through past experiences or teachings?

Key points:

- A lot of times the Word of God gives us the answers that we are looking for in life, but we either don't go to the Bible or forget what we have seen.
- The Bible often lifts our eyes to see God's perspective on the things we are facing and gives us renewed hope for the future.

Points to ponder:

- *Psalm 119* is the longest chapter in the Bible. It repeatedly talks about the value of knowing and obeying all the laws and precepts that are in the Bible.
- It may be helpful to read the following verses either in preparation for the study or with your group.
Psalm 119:24, 37, 89-96, 97-104, 129-136.

Read Luke 24:28-35 and John 11:25-27.

1. How do you respond to the idea that God often comes to us in ways that we don't really expect? How can you be prepared to receive Him if He unexpectedly shows up at your house or in your life?
2. How should the hope of the resurrection affect your daily life ... even the average, ordinary days when all you seem to do is plod along?
3. What about the Easter story makes your heart burn within you? Is there a particular part of Christ's death, resurrection or ascension that really inspires you? Why?
4. What does the phrase, *I am the resurrection and the life*, mean to you?
5. Is this something just for the future, when you die? Or does this truth about Christ practically impact your life today?

Key points:

- Each person can be surprised and blessed by the God who is expected to touch our world, but who rarely appears where and when we expect Him to. He takes broken hearts and causes them to become hearts that burn within us.
- Resurrection means that death has no power. There is no end of the road for the follower of Christ. That means we can take a long-term (eternal) view of life and all that comes our way. Even the ordinary days take on significance when we know we are living for eternity.
- Resurrection life is not about life after death so much as it is about the quality of life *now*. If we have Christ, we have resurrection life, and we have it now!



Take it deeper ... Spiritual Exercise

Read *Luke 24* in your devotional time this week and consider the resurrection with all its many aspects. Look at the people Jesus appeared to and how they reacted. Consider the way He reminded the disciples of all that He had already taught them about the resurrection. Think about the promises that Jesus made after the resurrection and ask Him to impact you with His resurrection life today!

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All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.

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