

RESURRECTION: CHAMPION OVER DEATH

The resurrection of Jesus Christ in Josh McDowell's words is "the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted upon the minds of man or it is the most fantastic fact of history." *The Resurrection Factor*, p. 7.

It is an event that has eternal meaning for every person who ever lived or ever will live.

LESSON AIM

To help teens see the significance of the resurrection for their lives.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- refute theories that deny the resurrection
- gain confidence in the historicity of the resurrection
- discover spiritual weapons that will help them live the resurrected life

TEXTS

Matthew 27:57-28:15; Mark 15:42-16:15; Luke 23:50-24:43; John 19:38-20:31 These four accounts give unique records of the burial, resurrection, and post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. Together they give us a complete picture of these events.

What You Need:

- a fake casket and volunteer to lie silently in it
- chalkboard or overhead
- copies of "Arm Yourself"
- pens or pencils

Arrange for a volunteer to lay in the casket at the front of the room and pretend to be dead. As teens enter, tell them that this is a funeral and the one in the casket recently died. Allow the teens to talk to the “dead person” in an attempt to make him crack a smile or laugh. Add some somber organ music for effect.

Say, “If the Lord tarries, each one of us will die; however, death is not the end thanks to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

I. THE FACT OF THE RESURRECTION IS A HISTORICAL MATTER.

Down through the centuries many have tried to disprove the resurrection by claiming that Jesus didn’t really rise from the dead. Many attempts to disprove the resurrection have failed or have been discredited. An English trial lawyer, Frank Morrison, set out to examine the facts and declare the resurrection a hoax. Instead, he became a believer because the evidence was so strong for its authenticity. He even wrote a book in defense of the resurrection called *Who Moved the Stone?*

Other unbelievers have come up with theories that explain away the resurrection.

Divide the class into groups of four and assign each group one of the following theories. Each member of the group will examine a different gospel account and put together an argument against the theories. When all the groups are finished, have a representative from each group share their findings:

Gospel Accounts: Matthew 27:28; Mark 14:65-16:15; Luke 23:26-24:43; John 19:1-20:31

Theories:

1. **Swoon theory**— Jesus never really died; He just fainted and when He came to in the cold tomb, He got up, took off His grave clothes, and left the tomb. Possible answers: the stone over the mouth of the tomb was *large* and no weakened man could have rolled it away (Mt. 27:60), at least four soldiers guarded the tomb and they would have seen Jesus if He tried to escape (Mt. 27:66), the soldiers did not break His legs because He was already dead (Jn. 19:32-33), Jesus’ body was run through with a spear to make sure He was dead (Jn. 19:34), and Jesus’ body was wrapped up with at least 75 pounds of spices (like a cocoon). No weakened man could

WARM-UP

What you need: fake casket and a volunteer

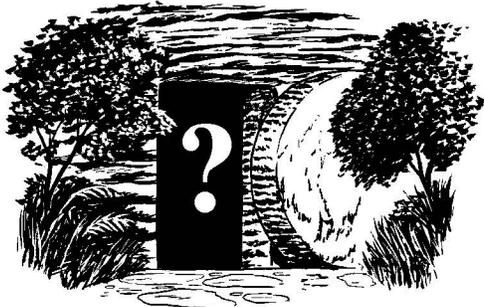
BRIDGE

CONTENT

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION



have moved after being wrapped so tightly with that much weight (Jn. 19:40).



2. **Stolen body theory**—Jesus’ disciples stole His body and then declared that He had risen from the dead. Possible answers: the religious leaders anticipated this scheme and made preparations to prevent it with a Roman guard (Mt. 27:62-66), the disciples were terrified of the Romans and the Jewish leaders and so weren’t brave enough to try this (Jn. 20:19), and the soldiers claimed this happened but obviously they couldn’t know what happened while they were asleep! (Mt. 28:11-15)



3. **The wrong tomb theory**—the women went to the wrong tomb early that morning and so were mistaken when they saw an open tomb. Possible answers: Mary Magdalene and the other women purposefully watched to see where He was laid (Mk. 15:47; Lk. 23:55), Jesus’ tomb would have been the only one surrounded by a Roman guard (Mt. 27:66), this was a private burial ground, not a public cemetery so it’s unlikely they could make that mistake (Mt. 27:57-60), and if the women did go to the wrong tomb, why didn’t the Pharisees go to the right one and produce the body?

4. **The spirit theory**—Jesus didn’t physically rise again, but His spirit was so strong in the disciples’ hearts that they considered Him alive. Possible answers: Jesus was grasped by the women (Mt. 28:9), He ate a piece of fish (Lk. 24:42-43), and Thomas was encouraged to touch His hands and side (Jn. 20:27-28).

Down through the centuries many brilliant men have declared the resurrection to be true because the evidence is so strong. Although we accept it by faith, there is irrefutable evidence to support its truthfulness.

II. THE MEANING OF THE RESURRECTION IS A THEOLOGICAL MATTER.

So the resurrection is true. What does that mean to the average teenager?

A. Death has been conquered (1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

Ask teens to list evil people of the past (Hitler, Atilla the Hun, Stalin, etc.) After writing the names on the board, write the word, “DEATH” over the top of the names. Say, “As powerful and destructive as these men were, they all had to bow when death called for them.”

**QUESTION
& ANSWER**

Death, for the Christian, has become powerless. We do not need to fear it since it is just the doorway to eternal life. Unbelievers should still fear death, though, because it is the doorway to eternal death.

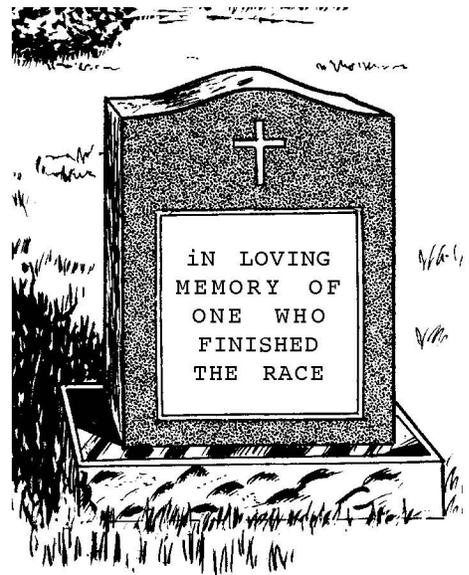
B. Our resurrection is guaranteed (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Death is not the end for a Christian. No matter how we may die, we will be resurrected when Jesus returns. Since Jesus paved the way, we can be sure we will follow.

C. It is a picture of how we are to live (Colossians 3:1-4; Ephesians 2:1-7).

We are to live for the purpose of glorifying God and to consider our selfish desires to be dead. That is, every time a selfish desire rears its ugly head and demands to be met, we should remember that we live to please God and not ourselves.

Spend the last few minutes of class working on this hand-out. (Answers: 1d, 2e, 3b, 4g, 5h, 6f, 7c, 8a)



CLOSING

What you need: copies of "Arm Yourself," pens or pencils

ARM YOURSELF

Match the selfish desire with the weapon (Scripture) that best kills that desire.

_____ 1. Approval of others

_____ 2. Lust

_____ 3. Pride

_____ 4. Revenge

_____ 5. Popularity

_____ 6. Selfishness

_____ 7. Materialism

_____ 8. Anger

a. Ephesians 4:26

b. James 4:6, 10

c. Matthew 6:19-24

d. John 12:42-43

e. 2 Timothy 2:22

f. James 3:13-18

g. Romans 12:19

h. Psalm 115:1

