LESSON SEVENTEEN

Built Different

"A Disciple Lives Because Resurrection Is Real"

SCRIPTURE | 1 Corinthians 15:12–34

MEMORY VERSE

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

MAIN IDEA OF THE TEXT

Built different: disciples know Jesus's resurrection is the basis of their hope.

DISCIPLESHIP RHYTHM

Discipleship Distinctive: Resurrection of Christ

GROUP TIME

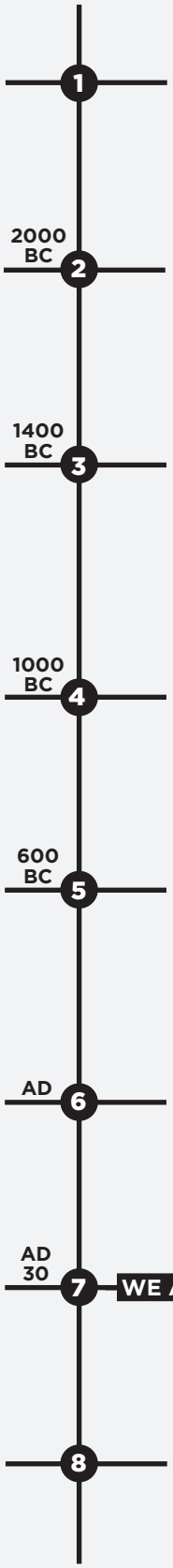
5 minutes	**Welcome**
5–10 minutes	**Attention Grabber**
10 minutes	**Story / Context**
25 minutes	**Discussion**
5–10 minutes	**Closing & Prayer**

PRAYER FOCUS

- **Advent Season** – Pray that during the season of Advent the name of Jesus would be praised and His birth and life would be celebrated. Pray specifically that the many families who gather during this season would keep Jesus at the center of their gatherings and that His message of hope would be spoken boldly.

BEGIN this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of his Word, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study.

GOD'S STORY TIMELINE



1. God Creates the World and Promises a Rescuer *(Genesis 1-11)*
God created everything good and placed humans in a garden to live in close relationship with Him. But Adam and Eve chose to trust themselves instead of God, and sin entered the world. Relationships, creation, even our connection to God was broken. Yet even in judgment, God promised that one day, a descendant of Eve would crush the serpent and bring healing.
+This points to Jesus as the promised Rescuer who defeats sin, Satan, and death.

2. God Calls a Family and Makes a Promise *(Genesis 12-50)*
God chose a man named Abram (later Abraham) and gave a covenant to him: that he would have a large family, receive a land, and be a blessing to all nations. Though Abraham and his descendants were deeply flawed, God continued His promise through Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.
+This points to Jesus as the true offspring of Abraham, through whom all nations are fully blessed.

3. God Rescues His People and Forms a Redeemed Nation *(Exodus-Deuteronomy)*
Generations later, Abraham's descendants were enslaved in Egypt. God raised up Moses to rescue them from oppression and slavery. God called His people into a relationship with Himself. He made a covenant with them, gave them the law, and instructed them in worship. He was forming a people who would live differently and show the world what it looked like to belong to Him.
+This points to Jesus as the greater Moses, who rescues us from slavery to sin and writes God's law on our hearts.

4. God Gives a Home and Promises a King *(Joshua-2 Chronicles)*
God brought His people into the promised land under Joshua's leadership. Over time, they asked for a king like the other nations. It was a disaster. But God graciously gave them David, with whom he made another covenant: one of David's descendants would rule forever. Solomon built the temple, but after his death, the kingdom split into two and began spiraling into idolatry and injustice again.
+This points to Jesus as the forever King from David's line, who reigns with justice and peace.

5. God Removes His People and Reminds Them of His Promise *(Ezra-Nehemiah)*
Because of their rebellion, God allowed His people to be conquered and taken into exile. First, it was the Northern Kingdom, Israel (to Assyria), then the Southern Kingdom, Judah (to Babylon). The temple was destroyed, and the glory of the kingdom faded. Yet God continued to speak through the prophets, reminding the people of His promise to restore them, give them new hearts, and send a Rescuer.
+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the new covenant, restores hearts, and fulfills every prophecy.

6. God Sends His Son and Fulfills His Promise *(Matthew-John)*
At just the right time, God sent Jesus into the world—born of a virgin, fully God and fully man. He perfectly obeyed the law, pointed us to the Father, and laid down His life as a sacrifice for our sins. On the third day, He rose again, proving that He is the Savior, the King, and the fulfillment of every covenant promise God has ever made.
+Jesus is the center of the story—all of Scripture leads to Him.

7. God Sends His Spirit and Builds His Church *(Acts-Jude)*
After rising from the dead, Jesus ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to empower His followers. The early Church spread the good news of Jesus across the Roman world—planting churches, welcoming both Jews and Gentiles, and learning to live as God's new covenant people. Though imperfect, the Church carries Jesus' mission forward today.
+This points to Jesus as the risen King who gives the Spirit to dwell in us and send us on mission.

8. God Restores All Things and Dwells with His People *(Revelation)*
The story isn't over. One day Jesus will return to judge evil and make all things new. There will be a new heaven and new earth, where God's people from every tribe and nation will live with Him forever. There will be no more pain, no more death, and no more sin—just joy, justice, and unbroken peace.
+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the story to its perfect and eternal culmination.

1 GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

LEADER TIP

To grab your participants' attention, start your lesson by telling a story related to the lesson's main idea. We have provided you with three options in this section, but feel free to develop your own.

OPTION 1: TRAPPED MINERS IN CHILE

In 2010, thirty-three miners were trapped deep underground after a mine collapsed in Chile. For more than two weeks, rescue workers drilled while families waited on the surface, not knowing whether the miners were alive. Then a drill finally reached the shelter, and the miners sent a message back up: they were alive.

That message didn't bring them out of the ground immediately; it still took weeks to pull them out. But everything about the waiting changed, because hope now had something real to support it.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *Have you ever thought something was true and then received proof? Tell about the experience.*
- *How did knowing the miners were alive change the way people waited and worked for their rescue?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:
The message from underground did not end the waiting, but it gave proof to ground the families' hope. In 1 Corinthians 15:12–34, Paul showed that the resurrection of Jesus is the firm basis for Christian hope. Disciples are built different because disciples know Jesus's resurrection is the basis of their hope.

OPTION 2: ONLY LIVE FOR TODAY?

In Isaiah 22, Jerusalem was facing judgment. The situation should have led the people to humility, repentance, and grief over their sin. But instead of turning back to God, they threw a party. Isaiah said there was "joy and revelry," with people eating meat, drinking wine, and saying, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

That is the line Paul picked up in 1 Corinthians 15. If there is no resurrection, then that way of life starts to make sense. Get what you can. Enjoy what you can. Protect yourself. Live for today because death gets the last word. But Paul said Christ had been raised, and that changes everything. If resurrection is real, then hope is real, holiness matters, suffering is not wasted, and disciples do not live as if this life is all there is.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *Have you seen someone start too fast and not be able to sustain through the end? Maybe it was a race, a workout, a career idea, an investment, or something else. Share about the experience.*
- *Why do we sometimes overindulge now and not consider future consequences?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:
Isaiah shows us what life can become when people believe death gets the last word. In 1 Corinthians 15:12–34, Paul said the resurrection of Jesus gives disciples a different basis for life and hope. Disciples are built different because disciples know Jesus's resurrection is the basis of their hope.

OPTION 3: THE PAID-OFF DEBT LETTER

Imagine you have been buried under a debt you could never pay. Every month the statement shows up and you see the huge balance with interest forever accumulating. No amount of pretending changes what you owe. Then one day a letter arrives saying the debt has been paid in full. You would probably read it three times, check your account, and make sure it was real. But once you knew it was, everything would change. The debt no longer owns your future.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *Have you ever received a too-good-to-be-true offer? Tell us about it.*
- *How would knowing a crushing debt had actually been paid change the way you thought about your future?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:
A paid-off debt changes more than a number on a statement. It changes what hangs over you and what future you can imagine. In 1 Corinthians 15:12–34, Paul showed that because Christ has been raised, disciples have forgiveness, hope beyond death, and a reason to reject empty living.

2 SET THE STAGE

LEADER TIP

This section provides the historical, cultural, and literary context needed to properly interpret and apply the text.

OUTLINE

I. Greetings and Thanksgiving (1:1–9)
II. Problems in the church (1:10–6:20)
  A. Divisions and factions (1:10–4:21)
  B. Gross immorality (5:1–13)
  C. Litigation before pagan courts (6:1–11)
  D. Fornication with prostitutes (6:12–20)
III. Replies to questions from the Corinthians (7:1–14:40)
  A. Questions about marriage (7:1–40)
  B. Limitations of Christian liberty (8:1–11:1)
  C. Veiling of women in public worship (11:2–16)
  D. Disorderly behavior at the Lord's Supper (11:17–34)
  E. Exercise of spiritual gifts (12:1–14:40)
IV. The Resurrection of the Body (15:1–58)
  A. Centrality of Christ's resurrection (15:1–20)
  B. Sequence of resurrection events (15:21–28)
  C. The resurrection and suffering (15:29–34)
  D. Nature of the resurrection body (15:35–49)
  E. The believer's victory over death (15:50–58)
V. Conclusion (16:1–24)
  A. Collection for the believers at Jerusalem (16:1–4)
  B. Paul's plans for visiting Corinth (16:5–9)
  C. Exhortations, instructions, and salutations (16:10–24)[1]

CONTEXT

In 1 Corinthians 15:1–11, Paul reminded the Corinthians of the gospel they had received and on which they stood: Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised on the third day, and appeared to witnesses. Now he turned to the underlying problem. Some in Corinth were saying there is no resurrection of the dead. Paul showed them this was not a minor disagreement about the future. It was an error of incorrect belief (orthodoxy). If there is no resurrection, then Christ has not been raised either, and the gospel itself falls apart.

Paul followed that argument all the way through. If Christ has not been raised, faith is useless, believers are still in their sins, those who have died in Christ are lost, and Christians are to be pitied. But Christ has been raised. His resurrection is the "firstfruits" of what God will do for those who belong to Him. Because Jesus lives, sin does not have the final word, death does not have the final word, and disciples do not have to live as though this life is all there is. Disciples are built different because disciples know Jesus's resurrection is the basis of their hope.

[1] F. Alan Tomlinson, "1 Corinthians," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1811.

FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS

We look for hope in comfort, pleasure, achievement, control, or whatever can make this life feel full enough for now. We fear death, avoid thinking about judgment, and settle for empty living because we have no lasting hope beyond ourselves.

GOSPEL RESPONSE

Jesus really died, and He really rose from the dead. His resurrection declares that sin has been dealt with, death has been defeated, and those who belong to Him have a future beyond the grave. Because Christ has been raised, disciples are forgiven, those who die in Christ are not lost, and our lives do not have to be spent chasing temporary things as though this world is all we have. We can live with hope because our hope rests on the risen Jesus.

DISCIPLESHIP RHYTHM: DISCIPLESHIP DISTINCTIVE: RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The resurrection of Christ is essential to who Jesus is and what He has accomplished. Paul said if Jesus has not been raised, then Christian faith is futile, we are still in our sins, and those who have died in Christ are lost. But "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:20). His resurrection means the cross was not the defeat of Jesus and death did not have the final word. The Jesus who died for our sins is alive.

Because Jesus has been raised, disciples have a different basis for hope and a different reason for living. Paul could face danger and sacrifice because his hope reached beyond this life. He could reject the "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" attitude because death is not the end of the story. The resurrection of Christ gives disciples confidence that forgiveness is real, hope beyond death is secure, and a life given to Jesus is never empty. Disciples are built different because disciples know Jesus's resurrection is the basis of their hope.

3 LOOK AT THE BOOK

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find exercises you can use to lead your group through Observation, Interpretation, and Application. As the leader, work through all the exercises below to ensure you understand the text well.

1 Corinthians 15:12–19 Paul finally named the problem driving the chapter: "How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (v. 12). The Corinthians had already received Paul's preaching that Jesus Himself had been raised (15:1–11). Yet some were denying that resurrection was the future God intended for His people.

That makes more sense in their Greco-Roman setting. Views of the afterlife varied, but many people could imagine the soul surviving death more easily than they could imagine God raising the body. The body was often treated as temporary or inferior. We see something of this resistance in Acts 17:32, where some Athenians mocked Paul when he spoke of resurrection.

Paul had already challenged this thinking in 1 Corinthians. In 6:13–14 (see lesson 6), some Corinthians seem to have treated bodily appetites as spiritually unimportant. Paul answered, "By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also." Their future resurrection meant their bodies mattered to God now.

Paul's argument in verses 13–19 is simple: follow your belief to its conclusion. If dead people cannot be raised, then Jesus was not raised either, because He was at one time dead. The proof of His death was His burial. If Jesus was not raised, Christianity collapses. Jesus was not who He said He was and He was not able to do what He said He would do. Preaching and faith are "useless" (v. 14), the apostles are false witnesses, faith is "futile" (v. 17), believers remain in their sins, and Christians who have died are lost.

Verse 17 is especially important: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." *The ESV Study Bible* helps explain this point well based on Paul's words in Romans 4:25:

> Both the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are necessary for forgiveness of sins and justification. When God the Father raised Christ from the dead, it was a demonstration that he accepted Christ's suffering and death as full payment for sin, and that the Father's favor, no longer his wrath against sin, was directed toward Christ, and through Christ toward those who believe. Since Paul sees Christians as united with Christ in his death and resurrection (6:6, 8–11; Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:12; 3:1), God's approval of Christ at the resurrection results in God's approval also of all who are united to Christ, and in this way results in their "justification."[2]

The resurrection is God's vindication of the crucified Christ and the evidence that sin and death have truly been defeated. If death still holds Jesus, there is no victory to announce. The gospel necessarily includes both death *and* resurrection.

Paul referred to deceased believers as those who have "fallen asleep." Sleep was a common ancient way of speaking about death, but for Christians the image takes on added meaning because of resurrection. Paul was not suggesting that death is unreal or harmless. He would

[2]The ESV Study Bible, Crossway, 2008. https://www.esv.org/Romans+4/

soon call death "the last enemy." The point is that death is no longer permanent for those who belong to Christ. Just as sleep is followed by waking, the death of a believer will be followed by resurrection when Christ returns. That is why Paul could use the softer language of sleep without minimizing the grief of death.

But if there is no resurrection, the metaphor collapses. Those believers have not merely fallen asleep; they have perished (v. 18). The Corinthians may have wanted to keep Christian hope while giving up bodily resurrection, but Paul would not let them separate the two. Hope beyond death depends on more than the survival of the soul or comforting memories of the dead. It depends on God actually physically raising His people as He raised Christ.

That leads to Paul's startling conclusion in verse 19: "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied." He did not mean following Jesus has no value in the present. The gospel creates real community, holiness, joy, and purpose now. His point is that the Christian life makes claims and demands that only make sense if resurrection is true.

Paul's own life is the clearest example. He surrendered his status, endured persecution, accepted hardship, and repeatedly placed himself in danger because he believed Christ was risen and death is not the end. Later in this same passage he asked, "Why do we endanger ourselves every hour?" (v. 30). If resurrection is false, Paul had not simply chosen a demanding lifestyle. He had built his life around a lie and suffered for a future that would never come. Christianity without resurrection would therefore be more than disappointing; it would be tragically mistaken.

1 Corinthians 15:20–23 Verse 20 overturns everything Paul had just described: "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead."

Paul called Christ "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." The image comes from Israel's agricultural and worship life. The first portion of the harvest was presented to God (see Leviticus 23:9–14), but it also belonged to the same harvest that would follow. Jesus's resurrection, then, is not an isolated miracle. It is the beginning and the guarantee of the resurrection harvest. Raising Jesus from the dead shows that God intends to do the same for those who belong to Jesus.

Paul explained this through Adam and Christ. Adam stood at the head of humanity marked by sin and death. His disobedience in Genesis 3 did not affect him alone. Sin entered the human story through Adam, and death became the shared condition of everyone who belongs to that fallen humanity. That is what Paul meant when he said, "in Adam all die" (v. 22). Every human being enters a world already under the power of sin and death.

Christ stands at the head of a new humanity. Just as Adam's act brought death to those connected to him, Christ's resurrection brings life to those who belong to Him. "In Christ all will be made alive" does not mean every person will automatically receive resurrected eternal life. Paul clarified in verse 23 that he was speaking about "those who belong to him." The contrast is between two humanities with two different destinies: in Adam, death; in Christ, resurrection life. Jesus did not simply rise for Himself. His resurrection began a new humanity that death will not be able to hold.

There is also an order. Christ has already been raised. Those who belong to Him will be raised "when he comes." Disciples live between the beginning of resurrection in Jesus and its completion when He returns. Christian hope looks forward because God has already begun the work.

1 Corinthians 15:24–28 Paul now expanded the horizon. Resurrection is part of God's larger purpose to bring the entire creation under the victorious rule of Christ.

Verses 25 and 27 bring together two important Old Testament texts. "He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" echoes Psalm 110:1, a royal psalm repeatedly applied to Jesus in the New Testament. The language about everything being placed under His feet also draws from Psalm 8:6, where humanity is given dominion over creation.

Paul applied both texts to Jesus. He is the promised king of Psalm 110 and the true human ruler who fulfills Psalm 8. Adam's humanity brought creation under sin and death. Christ brings it under God's victorious rule.

This is why Paul called death "the last enemy" (v. 26). Scripture does not ask Christians to pretend death is harmless or natural in the deepest sense. God created human beings for life with Him, but death entered the human story through sin. Death tears apart the fabric of humanity, which God designed to be together. Death divides the physical body and eternal soul. Death separates people and breaks relationships. So, death brings grief, which hurts, because death really is an enemy.

Christian hope is more than the survival of the soul. God intends to destroy death itself by raising His people physically. The resurrection of Jesus is the beginning of that victory, and the resurrection of those who belong to Christ will display it fully. Death is "last" because every other opposing power will finally be brought under Christ's rule, and then even death will lose its hold.

Verses 27–28 draw again from Psalm 8, where God placed all things under humanity's feet. Paul said this promise finds its fulfillment in Christ. Jesus reigns as the true human king until every enemy has been subjected to Him. Paul then clarified that when "everything" is placed under Christ, the Father is obviously not included. The Father is the One who gives the Son this rule.

That helps explain the statement that the Son will finally be "made subject" to the Father. Paul was not suggesting Jesus becomes less divine. He was describing the completion of the Son's messianic mission. Christ defeats sin, death, and every rebellious power, then presents the physical kingdom fully restored to the Father.

The phrase "that God may be all in all" describes the goal of God's saving work. Nothing remains outside His uncontested rule. Sin is gone, death is defeated, and no rival power remains. The resurrection of Christ therefore points beyond individual hope after death to the day God's victory fills the whole creation.

1 Corinthians 15:29 Verse 29 gives us one of the strangest references in the New Testament: "What will those do who are baptized for the dead?"

Many explanations have been proposed. One longstanding interpretation is that some people at Corinth were receiving baptism on behalf of people who had died, perhaps people connected to the church who died before being baptized. Other scholars understand the phrase differently, and Paul gave too little information for certainty.

Two details we should be aware of as we seek to understand and apply this verse. Paul said "those" who are baptized for the dead, not "we," meaning this is not a practice Paul was involved in. Additionally, he neither commanded nor explained the practice. So, at the least, this is not a good verse on which to build a doctrine of proxy baptism.

Fortunately, the practice itself was not Paul's main point. Whatever the Corinthians were doing, it assumed death was not the end. Paul was exposing another inconsistency: Why participate in a practice that assumes something matters beyond death while denying that the dead will be raised? If the dead are not raised, then a practice like this is useless.

1 Corinthians 15:30–32 Paul then turned to an example he understood firsthand: his own life.

"Why do we endanger ourselves every hour?" (v. 30). Paul's ministry only makes sense if resurrection is real. In 2 Corinthians 1:8–9, he described suffering in Asia so severe that he "despaired of life itself." Resurrection was not an abstract doctrine for Paul. It allowed him to keep obeying Jesus when obedience might cost his life.

When Paul said he "fought wild beasts in Ephesus" (v. 32), he was probably speaking figuratively about violent human opposition. As a Roman citizen, being condemned to fight animals in an arena would have been unusual, and Acts records no such event. Ancient writers could describe vicious opponents as wild animals.

Then Paul quoted Isaiah 22:13: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." The original context sharpens the quotation. Jerusalem faced judgment, and God called the people to repentance. Instead, they ate, drank, and essentially said, "We are going to die anyway, so we might as well enjoy ourselves."

Paul saw the same logic behind resurrection denial. If death ends everything, why sacrifice, suffer, or deny yourself? Immediate pleasure begins to make sense as a way of life.

But Christ has been raised. That means present pleasure does not have to carry the whole weight of making life worthwhile. Disciples can give themselves away because death will not erase what God is doing.

1 Corinthians 15:33–34 Paul closed by showing that bad theology eventually shapes the way people live. "Bad company corrupts good character" was a familiar saying from Greek literature, usually associated with the playwright Menander. Paul borrowed a line his Corinthian audience would recognize to warn them about the people and ideas shaping their beliefs.

In context, "company" may involve more than immoral friends. Spend enough time listening to people who say resurrection does not matter, and eventually you begin living as if resurrection does not matter.

Verse 34 makes the connection explicit: “Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning.” The language translated “come back to your senses” carries the idea of sobering up. That is especially fitting immediately after the quotation, “Let us eat and drink.” Paul described a worldview that ends in a party before death and then told the Corinthians to sober up.

His final rebuke would have stung a congregation proud of its knowledge: “There are some who are ignorant of God.” Denying resurrection revealed that they did not understand God and His saving purpose as well as they thought.

The resurrection changes how disciples understand sin, suffering, pleasure, obedience, death, and the future. Christ has been raised, so believers are not still in their sins. Those who die in Christ are not lost. Death itself will be destroyed. And disciples have a reason to reject a life built only around what they can get before they die.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:12–34

15 12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead,
how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13
If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been
raised. 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.

20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of
those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man,
the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in
Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in turn:
Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24
Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the
Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For
he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last
enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For he “has put everything under his
feet.” s Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is
clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under
Christ. 28 When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made
subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in
all.

29 Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized
for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized
for them? 30 And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour?
31 I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in
Christ Jesus our Lord. 32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more
than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,

“Let us eat and drink,
for tomorrow we die.” a

33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." c 34 Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.[3]

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Gather in groups of three to five people to discuss the Observation and Interpretation questions.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 1: CONSEQUENCES IF DEATH IS FINAL

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12–19. Paul gave a list of consequences if death is final and there is no resurrection. What are the consequences? Make a list.

Suggested Response: Paul said if there is no resurrection from the dead, then Christ has not been raised because He was really dead. Preaching and faith are useless, the apostles were false witnesses, believers are still in their sins, those who have died in Christ are lost, and Christians are to be pitied if their hope is only for this life.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 2: CONSEQUENCES IF RESURRECTION IS REAL

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20–28. Paul explained what is true since resurrection is real and Jesus was really resurrected. What did Paul say is true? Make a list including what has happened and what will happen in the future.

Suggested Response: Paul said Christ has been raised as the firstfruits of those who have died. All those who belong to Christ will be resurrected. Jesus Christ will reign as king and subdue all his enemies and give the kingdom to God the Father.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 3: PAUL AS AN EXAMPLE

Read 1 Corinthians 15:29–34. Paul used himself as an example. What hardships did he face? What warnings did he give the Corinthians?

Suggested Response: Paul said he faced danger every hour and died every day. He questioned why he would suffer instead of taking every opportunity to party. He warned the Corinthians not to be misled, told them bad company corrupts good character, called them to come back to their senses, and told them to stop sinning.

[3] *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1 Corinthians 15:12–34.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 1: RESURRECTION IS ESSENTIAL

In 1 Corinthians 15:12–19, why did Paul say Christian faith falls apart if resurrection is not real?

Suggested Response: First, if resurrection is not real, then Jesus Christ was not resurrected. Second, Paul showed that the resurrection cannot be separated from the gospel. If Christ has not been raised, then the apostles preached something false, faith has no saving power, believers are still in their sins, and those who have died in Christ are gone forever. Christianity does not rest only on Jesus's teaching or example. It rests on the truth and power of God that the crucified Jesus was raised from the dead.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 2: CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS

In 1 Corinthians 15:20–28, Paul explained that Jesus Christ was resurrected as the firstfruit. Why is this important? What did Paul mean by calling Christ the "firstfruits," and what hope does that give those who belong to Him? What hope does that give you as a disciple of Jesus?

Suggested Response: Firstfruits were the beginning of a harvest and the promise that more was coming. Paul was saying Jesus's resurrection was the beginning of the resurrection God promised His people. Just as humanity shares death through Adam, those who belong to Christ will share His resurrection life. This means disciples of Jesus will also be physically resurrected from the dead. This gives me hope that the life I am now living will not be the end of my existence when I die. I will have eternal existence, including a physical resurrection of my body. Jesus Christ really accomplishes the defeat of death!

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 3: RESURRECTION MEANING FOR TODAY

In 1 Corinthians 15:29–34, Paul connected the truth of resurrection with how the Corinthians presently lived. What impact does the resurrection have on how you live today?

Suggested Response: Paul showed that what we believe about the future shapes how we live in the present. If death is the end, then avoiding sacrifice and chasing whatever pleasure we can find starts to make sense. But if Christ has been raised and death is defeated, then suffering for Christ, resisting sin, and giving ourselves to what matters are not wasted. Resurrection hope gives disciples a reason to live differently now.

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find questions to choose from that will help your group consider how God calls them to respond to the text. Help your group set measurable action steps.

Leaders – share your story with your group. It takes 3-5 minutes. You are modeling this for your group, so follow the guidelines. (Click here for the guidelines).

Challenge – group people into 2's or 3's and have them prepare to share their story with each other next week. Set aside 15-20 minutes of your group time for this.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

QUESTION 1: Paul explained that resurrection is real and impacts present day living. What are some ways the truth of the resurrection impacts your faith this week?

Suggested Response: The resurrection reminds me that my faith rests on something God has actually done. It is certain, and it is completed. Jesus is alive, so my hope is not based on wishful thinking or how strong I feel. When I feel discouraged, uncertain, or afraid, I can come back to the reality that Christ has been raised and the hardships I face are temporary.

As your group responds, use follow-up questions to guide below surface-level responses. Encourage transparent responses.

QUESTION 2: Paul taught that all believers will share in Jesus's resurrection. How does that change the way you think about death?

Suggested Response: Death is still painful, and Christians still grieve the breaking of relationships it brings. But death is not the end for those who belong to Christ. Because Jesus has been raised, I can face death with real hope. I do not have to pretend death is harmless, but I also do not have to believe it gets the final word.

QUESTION 3: Paul said Christ will reign and defeat all enemies, even death. Where do you need that bigger picture of God's victory right now?

Suggested Response: I may need that hope in a place life feels broken, unfair, painful, or out of control. Some examples are broken relationships or maybe conflict in marriage that is tearing the relationship apart. Maybe I am facing a terminal medical diagnosis. Maybe I am facing the loss of a loved one. Maybe I am a parent with a prodigal child. Maybe I have bills I cannot pay and the weight is heavy.

Paul reminds me that what I experience right now is not the end of the story. Christ is reigning, and God is moving history toward the day when every enemy, including death, is defeated. Hardships now are temporary. God's promise is true and eternity will be different.

QUESTION 4: Paul explained that he suffered and endured hardships because of the hope brought by the reality of the resurrection. What is something costly about following Jesus that resurrection hope helps you keep doing?

Suggested Response: It may be forgiving someone, serving when I am tired, giving generously, obeying when it costs me, standing for truth, or staying faithful through suffering. Resurrection hope reminds me that faithfulness is never wasted. What I do for Christ now matters beyond this life.

QUESTION 5: Paul quoted, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Where are you tempted to live as though this life is all there is?

Suggested Response: I may be tempted to chase comfort, money, success, experiences, approval, or whatever feels good right now. Those things can become too important when I forget that my future

is with Christ. Resurrection hope frees me to enjoy God's gifts without expecting temporary things to give my life ultimate meaning.

QUESTION 6: Paul warned that "bad company corrupts good character." What voices or influences are shaping the way you think about life?

Suggested Response: The people I spend time with, the media I consume (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, podcasts, etc.), and the voices I listen to can shape what I value. Some influences can slowly disciple me to live for comfort, success, pleasure, or fear instead of Christ. I need to pay attention to what is shaping my view of life and keep returning to the truth of the gospel.

QUESTION 7: How can our group help one another live with resurrection hope?

Suggested Response: We can remind one another that Jesus is alive, pray with one another when life is hard, encourage one another to remain faithful, and speak hope when someone is grieving or discouraged. We can help one another remember that death is not the end and that a life given to Jesus is never wasted. Disciples are built different because disciples know Jesus's resurrection is the basis of their hope.

4 CHALLENGE

LEADER TIP

End your study time with one final challenge and prayer. Your final challenge should pull together everything you covered in this lesson and call your participants to action.

Disciples are built different because disciples know Jesus's resurrection is the basis of their hope. Paul refused to treat the resurrection like an optional doctrine. If Christ has not been raised, then faith is empty, sin still wins, and death gets the final word. But Christ has been raised. That changes how disciples face fear, suffering, temptation, and death.

Consider this week where resurrection hope needs to shape the way you live.

- Where are you tempted to live as though this life is all there is?
- What fear or discouragement needs to be answered by the reality that Christ is alive?
- What act of obedience feels costly right now, and how does resurrection hope help you remain faithful?
- Who could you encourage this week with the hope that death does not get the final word?

Because Jesus is alive, forgiveness is real, death is defeated, and faithfulness is never wasted. Disciples can live differently now because their hope reaches beyond the grave.

Let's pray.