DISCUSSION GUIDE

BUILT DIFFERENT :
“A Disciple Labors in Hope”

SCRIPTURE | 1 Corinthians 15:35–58

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 labor faithfully because of the promise of their own resurrection.

DISCIPLESHIP RHYTHM

Discipleship Distinctive: Eternity and Bodily Resurrection

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

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

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 1: WHAT IS THE RESURRECTION BODY LIKE?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:35–44. What farming illustration did Paul use to explain resurrection? What contrasts did he give between the body that is sown and the body that is raised?

Suggested Response: Paul compared the body to a seed that is sown and then given a new form by God. He also pointed to the different kinds of bodies and glory God has already created. Paul said the body is sown perishable and raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor and raised in glory. It is sown in weakness and raised in power. It is sown a natural body and raised a spiritual body.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 2: ADAM AND CHRIST

Read 1 Corinthians 15:45–49. Paul contrasted Adam and Christ. What contrasts did he identify? What did he say disciples will one day bear because of Christ?

Suggested Response: Adam is the first man, from the dust of the earth, and became a living being. Christ is the last Adam, the second man from heaven, and is described as a life-giving spirit. Paul said believers have borne the image of the earthly man and will one day bear the image of the heavenly man.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 3: CHANGED, VICTORIOUS, AND STEADFAST

Read 1 Corinthians 15:50–58. What did Paul say will happen to believers at the last trumpet? In light of victory over death, what does a disciple believe and do?

Suggested Response: Paul said the dead will be raised imperishable and believers who are still alive will also be changed. The mortal will be clothed with immortality, and death will be swallowed up in victory. God gives this victory through Jesus Christ. Because of this, believers are to stand firm, let nothing move them, and give themselves fully to the work of the Lord because their labor in the Lord is not in vain. They believe the way they live and the things they do have meaning and impact. They are not in vain or meaningless.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 1: RESURRECTION MEANS TRANSFORMATION

In 1 Corinthians 15:35–44, what does the seed illustration teach us about the relationship between our present bodies and our resurrection bodies?

Suggested Response: The seed shows both continuity and transformation. God raises the same person who dies, but resurrection is not simply a return to our present condition. What is now perishable, weak, and subject to death will be raised imperishable, glorious, and powerful. Paul was describing bodily resurrection, not escape from the body. God will transform His people for a kind of life their present bodies cannot sustain.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 2: FROM ADAM TO CHRIST

In 1 Corinthians 15:45–49, why did Paul contrast Adam and Christ?

Suggested Response: Paul contrasted Adam and Christ because they each represent humanity. Adam represents the humanity we presently share—earthly, mortal, and subject

to death. Christ represents the resurrection humanity God is bringing His people into. Just as we now fully share Adam's mortality, those who belong to Christ will one day share the likeness of the risen Christ. Paul's point is that Adam does not get the final word about what it means to be human.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 3: WHY OUR PRESENT LIVES MATTER

In 1 Corinthians 15:50–58, why does the certainty of future resurrection lead Paul to tell believers to stand firm and give themselves fully to the work of the Lord?

Suggested Response: Because God will transform His people and finally defeat death, faithful work done in Christ is never ultimately wasted. Disciples may not see the full result of their labor in this life, but death cannot erase what God is doing. Resurrection gives present faithfulness lasting meaning. That is why Paul moved directly from victory over death to the command to remain steadfast and abound in the Lord's work.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

QUESTION 1: Have you thought about your future resurrection before? Tell us how you think about it.

Suggested Response: Use this question to begin the conversation with your group and invite them to begin talking. The goal is not necessarily a doctrinally correct response. As your group responds, use follow-up questions to guide responses beyond a one- or two-word response. Encourage story-telling or explanations of how death and resurrection are thought about.

QUESTION 2: Paul used an analogy to help us understand the resurrection. He talked about planting a seed and how it sprouts into a grain stalk. Our current bodies are the seed, and our resurrected bodies are the grain stalk. How are these similar? How are they not similar?

Suggested Response: Bodies that die are described as perishable, dishonorable, weak, and natural. They are connected to Adam, being made from the dust of the earth. What dies is not completely different from what is resurrected. We maintain our personal identity, just like the seed that is planted can only grow into the type of plant the seed is. So, our bodies that die are connected to who we are. Our resurrected bodies will be different in that they will be better, equipped for eternal living. They are described as imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual (this does not mean non-physical). They are connected to Jesus Christ.

Use this question to continue the discussion at a level where it is easy for your group to participate. Try not to allow one- or two-word responses. Ask for descriptions and elaborations.

QUESTION 3: How does Christ's victory over death change the way you face death or grief?

Suggested Response: Resurrection does not mean death stops hurting. Christians still grieve, because death is an enemy. Death causes a break in relationships because we can no longer experience each other's company. But death does not have the final word. Jesus has risen, and those who belong to Him will also be raised. So, Christ's victory can help us look to the promise of the future, where death is overcome and disciples who have died are resurrected.

QUESTION 4: It is hard to live in light of a future promise that seems so distant. Where are you most tempted to live as though this present life is all that matters? How do you over-emphasize this area of your life?

Suggested Response: I may put too much weight on comfort, success, health, possessions, experiences, careers, or what I can accomplish right now. Resurrection reminds me that my life is moving toward something God has promised beyond what I can presently see.

This question can be very general, and responses can be disconnected from the individual. Use follow-up questions to invite your group to share in a more detailed and transparent way how they are over-emphasizing (or putting too much focus on) the area of their life they identified.

QUESTION 5: Where are you discouraged because you cannot see the results of your faithfulness?

Suggested Response: I may be discouraged in parenting, serving, praying, discipling someone, sharing my faith, or continuing to obey in an area where very little seems to be changing. Paul's message to the Corinthians reminds me that visible results are not the only measure of whether my labor matters.

This question can also be very general. Use follow-up questions to invite your group to share in a more detailed and transparent way how they are discouraged. Avoid cliché responses. Rather, affirm the challenge of faithfulness when results are not seen or experienced, and thank the person who was courageous to share.

QUESTION 6: Paul told believers to stand firm and not be moved by pressures or influences. Where in your life do you most need perseverance right now?

Suggested Response: I may need perseverance (steadfastness) in a relationship, ministry responsibility, difficult season, long-term prayer, or area of obedience where I am tired of continuing. Resurrection hope gives me a reason to remain faithful even when I cannot see where God is taking the story.

QUESTION 7: What is one way you can give yourself fully to the work of the Lord this week?

Suggested Response: I can take a specific step of faithfulness instead of waiting for better circumstances or clearer results. That might mean serving someone, encouraging another disciple, sharing my story, praying for someone, using my gifts in the church, or continuing something God has already called me to do.

QUESTION 8: How can our group encourage one another when faithful work feels like it is not making a difference?

Suggested Response: We can remind one another of God's promises, pray for those who are discouraged, notice faithfulness instead of only visible success, and encourage one another to keep going. Because Christ has been raised and we will be raised with Him, our labor in the Lord is not in vain.