

Ice breaker: What is your favorite Easter tradition/memory?

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!" (John 20:1-2)

The resurrection and the skeptic: filter the doubt through the evidence...

"I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. **I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner.**" (Acts 26:25-26)

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless...your faith is futile; you are still in your sins...But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead...If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." (1 Cor. 15:13-14, 17, 20, 32b)

Then He said to Thomas... "Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:27-28)

If you are a skeptic, how difficult is it for you to believe in the resurrection? What is your biggest doubt? What would it take for you to believe?

The resurrection and the Christian: Jesus did the work, we get the win...

- **No fear of death (freedom)** – "Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." (Heb. 2:14-15) – **Is death your greatest fear? If not, what is your greatest fear? What would change in your life if you didn't have that fear?**

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. 15:54)

- **New hope in life (transformation)** – "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1:3) – **What one thing about you would you change if you had the chance?**
- **New purpose to engage (mission)** – "...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt. 28:19-20) – **How could you make this mission more of your own mission? Have you ever shared the message of Jesus with someone? What happened?**

(and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe. (1 Tim. 4:10)