

TRANSFORMED

People Changed by the Resurrection

STUDY GUIDE

TRANSFORMED—CHANGED BY THE RESURRECTION

Introduction

For over 2,000 years, enemies and skeptics of the Gospel have attempted to diminish its authenticity by disproving the most important fact in the story—the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The Jewish religious leaders were the first to attempt to dismiss the truth of the resurrection by bribing the guards to tell people that the disciples had broken into the garden tomb and stolen the body of Jesus (Matthew 28:11-15). But the false report of a stolen body couldn't overcome the growing truth that Jesus had been raised from the dead and was appearing to multitudes of people—sometimes up to 500 people at the same time (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Many different authors have attempted to historically prove the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (like Josh McDowell's "Evidence that Demands a Verdict," Lee Stroble's "Case for Easter" and "Case for Christ," and Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona's "The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus" to name a few). It's been 2,000 years with generation after generation of skeptics and efforts to disprove and diminish the resurrection. Yet here we are with almost 3 billion people on the planet professing their faith in Jesus—the Son of God who lived a perfect life, died a sacrificial death, and was raised from the dead. The evidence is compelling and insurmountable.

By far, the greatest evidence of the resurrection is found in the people who were changed by its truth. The first person to see Jesus after His resurrection was Mary Magdalene. She was crying outside His tomb because His body was missing. At first when she heard Him, she thought He was the gardener (John 20:13-16). She didn't recognize Jesus because He had undergone a transformation. Her testimony of the resurrection is the next step in her transformation from being a woman (possibly a prostitute) from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons to being a follower of Jesus to Rabbi to being the first witness of the resurrection. If the disciples were making up the story of the resurrection, culture dictated they would NEVER have chosen a woman. Yet with her encounter with the risen and living Jesus, she was TRANSFORMED—CHANGED BY THE RESURRECTION.

The last person to see the risen and living Jesus in the New Testament is a young Pharisee named Saul. He held the coats of the elders who stoned the first Christian martyr Stephen to death. Saul wanted to wipe out the Way and silence the Good News of the Resurrection. With blood lust in his heart, he received orders from the leaders of the Sanhedrin and was on his way to Damascus to persecute, arrest, and possibly kill followers of Jesus—that is until the risen Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus (see Acts chapter 9). Saul/Paul is a perfect example of how Jesus' resurrection changed people. This young Pharisee changed from Saul—one of the biggest persecutors of Christians—to the Apostle Paul—one of the most important converters of Christians. By the time he had written over half of the New Testament and planted churches all over the Roman Empire, Paul had been TRANSFORMED—CHANGED BY THE RESURRECTION.

Between Mary Magdalene and the Apostle Paul, the resurrection transformed the remaining eleven disciples—including Peter, James, John, and even doubting Thomas—to the point that all of them except John would die a martyr's death because of their belief in Jesus rising from the dead. Who would give their life for a lie? By far, the greatest evidence of the resurrection of Jesus was the change in the disciples. They went from being a rag tag assembly of uneducated, unsophisticated, unremarkable men and women who were hiding in the shadows and afraid for their lives—to being Spirit-filled, inspired, transformed leaders of a life-changing, world-altering movement in a matter of days.

On Good Friday, the Christian movement was on life support and fading fast—but it began to stir back to life on Easter and never looked back after Pentecost—and the reason was the disciples. They were changed from cringing cowards to roaring lions of the faith who fearlessly preached Jesus' resurrection. A prime example is the Apostle Peter's sermon on Pentecost where 3,000 were saved. They had transitioned from fraidy-cats to bold proclaimers of the faith—the majority of whom would die for their newfound faith and boldness. Why? They had seen the Risen Lord. They'd been TRANSFORMED—CHANGED BY THE RESURRECTION.

Members of Jesus' own family were transformed—including his half-brothers James and Jude. At one point during Jesus' ministry, his family was skeptical of what Jesus was doing. James would become the bishop of the early church in Jerusalem—and he and Jude would write important New Testament letters defending and affirming the resurrection. How could they make such a transformation? They'd been TRANSFORMED—CHANGED BY THE RESURRECTION.

The resurrection of Jesus gave Mary Magdalene, the disciples, Jesus' brothers, and the Apostle Paul a mission and purpose—to "Go and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:18-20). They were TRANSFORMED with a new perspective on life and how to live. They did as they were told, uniting to continue the work which Jesus had begun before His death. This mission gave them focus and concentration on what was important.

If this wasn't enough, a sense of mission was renewed fifty days after Jesus' Ascension when the Holy Spirit came and filled the disciples—giving them the ability to fulfil their mission in other countries. The followers of Jesus became more united. They prayed together, ate together, celebrated the Lord's Supper together, and were happy together. In Acts 2:42, 43 we read: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles." They sold their possessions and shared what they kept. This sense of fellowship was a result of the impact the resurrection had on them. Their experience of the resurrection of Jesus TRANSFORMED THEM!

The same is true today. There is numerous evidence of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—but by far, the most compelling evidence is found in people who've been TRANSFORMED by the risen and living Jesus in every generation.

Begin by praying—asking the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your time together, to open God’s Word to you, to grow in your walk with the Lord and with each other, and to show you how you might apply what you learn in your daily discipleship.

THEME: In a world where women were often seen as property and weren’t accepted as trustworthy witnesses in court, Jesus’ relationship with Mary Magdalene and her role as the first witness of the resurrection are evidence of the extent of her transformation.

SUMMARY: Some historians have said that Mary Magdalene was a penitent prostitute. Others (like author Dan Brown in “The DaVinci Code”) contend she was the spouse of Jesus. But neither of these narratives match what’s written about her in the Bible. The unchallenged facts in Scripture state she was from Magdala (a small fishing village southwest of Capernaum along the Sea of Galilee). Jesus cleansed her of seven demons (Luke 8:2)—meaning He freed her from the demonic oppression of evil spirits. The truth they all agree on is that Mary was captive to the darkness of evil spirits and bouts of insanity. Mark 16:8 says, “Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene out of whom he had cast seven demons.” A person controlled by evil spirits carried a great deal of shame and was ostracized in society.

Mary’s deliverance from darkness and her salvation transformed her into a trusted follower of Jesus. She was one of the women who accompanied, aided, and supported Jesus’ ministry in Galilee (Luke 8:1-3). These women, serving in the background, heard much of Jesus’ teaching and witnessed healings, miracles, and the deliverance from evil spirits. Mary’s faith grew the more she saw and experienced Jesus’ ministry. Mary’s faithfulness and service led her to the foot of the cross! All four canonical Gospels attest that she witnessed Jesus’ crucifixion and burial.

In John 19:25-27, we see that only Jesus’ mother, His aunt, Mary Magdalene, and John remained at the cross. Only a small group were present through the unjust trial of Jesus, who witnessed the brutality of the soldiers in flogging and beating Jesus, and who—along with John—witnessed Jesus’ death on the cross. The women stood silent and wept as Jesus’ life drained out of Him. Undoubtedly, this was the worst day of Mary’s life! Although in John’s account, Mary is silent and weeping with the others, the fact is they were present, as painful as it was! Their courage is admirable because by contrast, all the disciples but John had fled and were hiding. Sometimes being present in support and solidarity with one who’s suffering is a powerful statement!

Mary saw where Jesus was buried (Mark 15:47) and went with two other women on Easter morning to the tomb to anoint the corpse with spices. Finding the tomb empty, Mary ran to the disciples. She returned with Peter, who, astonished, left her. Christ then appeared to Mary and, according to John 20:17, instructed her to tell the Apostles that He was ascending to God. When Mary heard Jesus say her name, she reacted in two ways: 1) She immediately recognizes Him. Hearing Jesus’ voice say her name brought her out of shock and into the moment of full recognition!

And 2) she immediately tries to cling to Jesus, relating in a familiar human way, but Jesus tells her to release Him. He signals to her and to others that their relationship with Him would change because He's leaving them physically and going to His Father and sending the Holy Spirit to live in them. Jesus trusted Mary enough to give her the privilege of being the first to "bear witness" of His resurrection to the disciples! The word "apostle" means "one who is sent." Mary was sent to bear the most joyous news ever told! In this way, many commentaries say Mary Magdalene became an "apostle to the apostles"!

In 1 John 3:8, the author says, "But the Son of Man came to destroy the works of the devil." By His death on the cross and His resurrection, Jesus conquered death and has complete victory over Satan. It's fitting that, of all the disciples who could've had the honor of seeing him first, it was Mary Magdalene who had that privilege. In her deliverance from the powers of darkness and her transformation by Jesus, she was living proof of Jesus' victory over Satan!

Mary inspires us by her faithfulness in following Jesus, her diligent service to Jesus' ministry, and her courage to be present for some of Jesus' darkest hours of life. Mary's example teaches us that serving God is never in vain. Even after Jesus was crucified, Mary didn't give up stop serving Him. Yes, she was discouraged and sad, but she still believed Jesus was the Messiah. She went to the tomb to finish the work of preparing His body—still serving—and as a result, Mary was the first to see Jesus alive. She was the first witness, in part, because she continued to serve Jesus.

READ: John 20:1-18

TEACHING POINTS:

The transformation of Mary Magdalene teaches us:

- JESUS REDEEMS OUR PAST (Luke 8:1, 2)
- FOLLOWERS SERVE AND SUPPORT THE MINISTRY OF JESUS (Luke 8:3)
- DON'T STOP SERVING JESUS (John 20:1-3)
- KEEP LOOKING FOR JESUS (John 20:11-13)
- BE DESPERATE TO FIND JESUS (John 20:14, 15)
- JESUS KNOWS YOUR NAME! (John 20:16)
- MARY WAS THE FIRST WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION—WILL YOU BE THE NEXT? (John 20:17, 18)

RESPOND & DISCUSS:

- Is anyone willing to tell of a time when Jesus redeemed your past?
- In what ways have you and can you serve Jesus?
- How are you utilizing your spiritual gifts to do so?
- How desperate are you to find Jesus?

- What does it mean to you that Jesus knows us by our names? Do you believe Jesus knows your name?
- What confidence does that give you?
- What's the significance that the first witness of the resurrection was a woman?
- What's your takeaway from this week's lesson?
- What's your "I will..." statement as you consider this week's teaching?
- How might your spiritual gifts help you in living it out?
- Who do you need to tell?
- How can the group help?

WEEK TWO – APRIL 14

THOMAS—WHEN DOUBT TURNS TO FAITH

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Begin by praying—asking the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your time together, to open God’s Word to you, to grow in your walk with the Lord and with each other, and to show you how you might apply what you learn in your daily discipleship.

How did you do with your “I will…” statement from last week? How were you able to utilize your spiritual gifts in seeking to live it out?

THEME: Jesus appeared to the disciples behind locked doors on the first resurrection evening and changed them! But one of the disciples, Thomas, wasn’t there. He didn’t believe the other ten, and he wouldn’t believe without proof! As a result, Thomas’ transformation is a testimony to those who wish they could touch and see the proof of the resurrection. If you’re from Missouri and are saying “Show me” before you believe, the transformation of Thomas from doubt to faith is for you!

SUMMARY: Thomas has a backstory in the Gospel of John. In chapter 11, we read he’s with Jesus when Jesus learns that Lazarus has died and they decide to head to Bethany—which was a short distance from Jerusalem where Jesus would be in danger. Thomas’ response was “Let us also go that we may die with him” (John 11:16).

In chapter 14, on the last night of Jesus life, after Jesus has said, “Let not your hearts be troubled… and you know the way where I am going,” Thomas retorted, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus responds with “I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:1-6). I’m not sure, but if the 12 disciples had been given an assessment about what was happening around them, Thomas might’ve been the one who didn’t have a clue. That’s the way it is for literalists—those who need to need to have everything from A to Z explained to them.

So when Thomas wasn’t present on the first resurrection evening, the other disciples wouldn’t have been surprised at his reaction. He needed to see it for himself to believe it. Before we’re too rough on Thomas, we should be glad we have a story of transformation like his. It helps today’s skeptics to see their “tribe” in the Gospel accounts. Thomas wanted assurance and evidence. He also wanted Jesus and needed personal connection to dispel his doubts. While others can inspire and encourage us, they can’t give us their faith. The journey to faith in God and Jesus is ultimately personal—and sometimes lonely.

A week after Thomas’ demand for convincing evidence of Jesus’ resurrection (and it must’ve been a long week for him), Jesus reappeared to the whole group. His first words were a clear indication that he had neither isolated nor rejected Thomas. Jesus simply invited Thomas to set aside his doubts and believe. By making allowance for Thomas’ skepticism, the risen Jesus made it clear He’s open and ready to meet all of us—wherever we happen to find ourselves.

The palpable irony of the story is that from the mouth of the man who's subsequently been labelled "doubting Thomas" came one of the greatest expressions of faith: "My Lord and my God."

While John's Gospel puts the focus on Thomas' doubt, the doubt of the other disciples is glossed over. Even though Mary Magdalene had told them of her encounter with the risen Lord, all of them except Thomas stayed in hiding—while he, the practical one, might well have been out doing the shopping or even trying to verify Mary Magdalene's claims.

But if we're really honest, we must admit that we, too, waver between faith and doubt—even though we may eventually land in favor of faith. During our lives, we gain knowledge through direct experience, deduction, or reasoning, and through putting our faith in what others tell us. Social researchers point to the fact that more than 75% of our knowledge comes from accepting what others tell us.

Mary couldn't experience the resurrected Jesus for the disciples, and the disciples couldn't experience Jesus for Thomas. In the long run, we come to understand that it's faith, shaken at times by doubt, that keeps us on the path of searching for our own experience of Jesus. And we need the support of the community of faith to help us along that path.

READ: John 20:24-29

TEACHING POINTS:

The transformation of Thomas teaches us:

- EXPERIENCING JESUS CHANGES PEOPLE (John 20:19-22)
- WE CAN'T BASE OUR FAITH ON THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS (John 20:24, 25)
- ONE OF THE FIRST SIGNS OF THE PRESENCE OF JESUS IS PEACE (John 20:26)
- JESUS HEARS AND ADDRESSES OUR DOUBTS (John 20:27)
- FAITH BORN FROM QUESTIONS AND DOUBTS IS OFTEN THE DEEPEST AND STRONGEST (John 20:28)
- THE TRANSFORMATION OF THOMAS WAS INCLUDED FOR US (John 20:29)

RESPOND & DISCUSS:

- How would you explain to someone the transformation Jesus brings to us?
- Have you seen the transformation Jesus brings in the life of someone else?
- Have you ever encountered someone who had questions and doubts that made it difficult to believe in or trust Jesus?
- Do you have questions and doubts that have made it difficult for you to believe in or trust Jesus?
- Have you experienced the peace Jesus brings when He transforms a life? What was that like?

- How can we pray for each other's doubts to become faith?
- How does the story of Thomas' transformation from doubt to faith inspire you?
- What's your takeaway from this week's lesson?
- What is your "I will..." statement as you consider this week's teaching?
- How might your spiritual gifts help you in living it out?
- Who do you need to tell?
- How can the group help?

WEEK THREE – APRIL 21

JAMES—WHEN A SKEPTIC BECOMES A FOLLOWER

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Begin by praying—asking the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your time together, to open God’s Word to you, to grow in your walk with the Lord and with each other, and to show you how you might apply what you learn in your daily discipleship.

How did you do with your “I will…” statement from last week? How were you able to utilize your spiritual gifts in seeking to live it out?

THEME: In some ways, the most difficult people to convince when it comes to our faith are the ones who know us the most—that is they live with us and see us at our best and our worst. We often forget Jesus was raised in a family. He was the eldest son, but the Gospels make it clear Jesus had brothers. Most of us can probably speak from personal experience about how siblings or family members can be difficult to convince.

SUMMARY: In Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55, we read a list of Jesus’ brothers: James, Joseph, Judas (Jude), and Simon. Mark 6 further mentions Jesus had sisters. Of these, James and Jude go on to write books (letters) in the New Testament which bear their names. Both are included after the Apostle Paul’s letters toward the end of the New Testament. Additionally, both are letters under the category of “General Epistles” because they were written to more general audiences than one church in one city.

The account of Jesus with His family in the Gospel of Mark chapter 3 makes it clear His siblings weren’t convinced Jesus was the Messiah. James, His brothers, and even His mother thought Jesus had “lost his senses” as they showed up when He was teaching “to take custody” of Him (Mark 3:21). Another time, Jesus’ brothers told Him to go to Judea where the Jews were seeking to kill him (John 7:2-4) since “not even his brothers were believing in him” (John 7:5).

“A prophet is not without honor,” Jesus said, “except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household” (Mark 6:4). During Jesus’ public ministry, His brothers rejected His message, criticized Him, and refused to follow Him.

But something happened along the way—they kept showing up as Jesus was teaching and healing. In the first chapter of Acts, just after the Ascension and ten days before the Holy Spirit fell on Pentecost, the text tells us that accompanying all the disciples in the Upper Room praying and waiting for the Promise of the Spirit were Jesus’ mother Mary and His brothers! They had shifted from being skeptics to being disciples. They were there—in the Upper Room—praying for Pentecost. What convinced Jesus’ brothers to now believe He was the Messiah, to become His disciples, and to devote their lives to Him? What persuaded them their brother was God? What transformed James from a skeptic to a convert to the leader of the church in Jerusalem and author of a book of the Bible?

Two things made all the difference. First, the Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:7 that Jesus personally appeared to James alive after the crucifixion. Pretty impressive, but it raises a question. If your brother died and a few days later appeared to you alive, it would be compelling evidence something significant had taken place. But what?

Resurrection alone isn't enough to convince someone of the resurrected person's divinity. Mary and Martha didn't believe their brother, Lazarus, was God—even though he rose from the dead. Neither did Jairus or the widow of Nain when their children were raised. Resurrection alone wouldn't be enough to convince James his older brother was God.

The resurrection was the final tipping point to convince James his older brother was the Messiah. But there was something more. Church historian Eusebius notes that James's nickname was "the Just" because he followed the Mosaic Law so well. One of the things a law-abiding Jew would know about God is that He is perfectly righteous. Old Testament Scriptures plainly teach God is "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Isaiah 6:3), is "without iniquity" (Deuteronomy 32:4), and "speaks truth" (Isaiah 45:19). James also knew that the Messiah would be called "Mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6). If God is perfectly righteous, and the coming Messiah would be God, then the Messiah would have to be perfectly righteous, too.

James was in the best position to know if Jesus was righteous. Growing up with siblings, not only do we see the sins they commit, but we often participate with them in the sins. More than anyone else, James had a front row seat to Jesus' life. He was in the perfect position to observe every mistake his brother made, and he would never believe Jesus was God if he'd seen him sin.

So what transformed James from a skeptic to a Christian saint? Two things: 1) Jesus' resurrection, and 2) the persuasive power of a sinless life. These two factors together compelled James to believe that Jesus, his brother, was God and convinced James to stake his life on that conviction (he died a martyr). Resurrection without purity wouldn't be enough to convince James "the Just" that his brother was God. Perfect holiness without resurrection would only make him resent his goody-two-shoes brother, not worship him.

James's conversion and transformation are compelling evidence that Jesus was both sinless and raised from the dead. As the New Testament record of the early church unfolds, at least two of Jesus' brothers—James and Jude—appear as leaders in the early church.

READ: Acts 1:12-14

TEACHING POINTS:

The transformation of James "The Just" teaches us:

- SOMETIMES THOSE WHO KNOW US ARE THE TOUGHEST TO CONVINCED (Mark 3:2-21)
- THE RESURRECTION CONVINCED SKEPTICS TO BECOME DISCIPLES (Acts 1:12-14)
- DON'T BE SURPRISED WHERE YOU'RE CALLED TO LEAD (Acts 15:12-21)
- BE FAITHFUL IN THE FACE OF HARDSHIP (James 1:1-8)

RESPOND & DISCUSS:

- Is there anyone who might have a difficult time seeing you as a follower? Why?
- Is there anyone in your life you've had a difficult time seeing as a follower of Jesus? Why?
- Can you name someone in whom you see the power of the resurrection at work? In what way(s)?
- Have you ever been surprised where God has called or placed you?
- Are you able to hold onto faith during hardship? What makes it easy? What makes it difficult?
- What is your takeaway from this week's lesson?
- What is your "I will..." statement as you consider this week's teaching?
- How might your spiritual gifts help you in living it out?
- Who do you need to tell?
- How can the group help?

WEEK FOUR – APRIL 28

PAUL—WHEN AN ENEMY BECOMES AN ALLY

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Begin by praying—asking the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your time together, to open God’s Word to you, to grow in your walk with the Lord and with each other, and to show you how you might apply what you learn in your daily discipleship.

How did you do with your “I will…” statement from last week? How were you able to utilize your spiritual gifts in seeking to live it out?

THEME: The transformation of the persecutor Saul to the Apostle Paul is one of the greatest accounts of resurrection power in the New Testament. Saul was dead set on destroying the church and anyone who claimed to follow Jesus—at least until he encountered the risen and living Jesus. As a result of his transformation, Paul became the most powerful presenter of the truth of the Gospel in the New Testament.

SUMMARY: The Apostle Paul was born in 4 B.C. in the city of Tarsus in Cilicia [modern-day Turkey] and died sometime between 62 and 64 A.D. in Rome, Italy. He was one of the leaders of the first generation of Christians and is often considered to be the second-most important person (after Jesus) in the history of Christianity. In his own day, although he was a major figure within the very small Christian movement, Paul also had many enemies and detractors—and his contemporaries likely didn’t afford him as much respect as they gave Peter and James. Paul was compelled to struggle, therefore, to establish his own worth and authority. His surviving letters, however, have had enormous influence on subsequent Christianity and secure his place as one of the greatest religious leaders of all time.

Paul wrote 13 of the 27 books in the New Testament. His Jewish pedigree was without question—from the tribe of Benjamin, trained by Gamaliel, a Pharisee of Pharisees, and zealous for his beliefs. In fact, the first time we meet him, Saul is described as a young man who was holding the cloaks of the elders who were stoning Stephen to death at the end of Acts chapter 7.

As chapter 8 begins, Saul has earned the title of persecutor of the church, and his blood lust for wiping out Christianity warranted a letter from the chief priests giving him permission to go to Damascus to find, arrest, beat, or do worse to any followers of Jesus he found there.

In chapter 9, Saul’s life is changed when he sees the risen and living Jesus on the road to Damascus. The radiance of Christ’s presence is so bright, Saul is struck blind as Jesus asks him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” Saul asks who’s speaking to him, and Jesus replies, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” Jesus then instructs Saul to go into Damascus where he will be told what to do next.

After some convincing, God sends Ananias to Saul. Ananias prays for Saul, scales fall from Saul's eyes, and he is filled with the Holy Spirit—and in that instant, Saul was changed. Ananias would disciple Saul for a while, followed by Barnabas. Eventually, he would become known as the Apostle Paul—author of 60% of the New Testament, church planter, Christian apologist, defender of the faith, and the second-most important figure in Christian history. God didn't waste a thing—his Roman citizenship, his Jewish heritage, his training under Gamaliel, his tutoring from Ananias and Barnabas—all of it came to bear in his clear understanding of and potent communication of the Gospel.

Paul's conversion and realization of the significance of the resurrection of the crucified Jesus caused him to rethink from the ground up everything he'd ever believed in—from his own identity to his understanding of who was God. Paul was transformed from a man who chased wealth and power to someone who lived in faith. He went from being a man mired in hatred for anything and anyone he couldn't control to someone who willingly relinquished control out of love for God. He went from being a disgrace to God to being one of God's most noteworthy and productive evangelists.

By the time he writes his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul is at the top of his game—just as in any generation, people had infiltrated the church and tried to diminish and diffuse belief in the resurrection. His words in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 clearly and concisely prove the resurrection to his readers.

READ: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

TEACHING POINTS:

The transformation of the Apostle Paul teaches us:

- THERE'S NOTHING GOD WON'T FORGIVE (Acts 7:54-8:2)
- WHEN OUR OLD SELF DIES, A NEW SELF IS BORN (Acts 9:19b-29)
- THE GOSPEL DOESN'T CHANGE (1 Corinthians 15:1)
- WE MUST CONTINUE TO BELIEVE (1 Corinthians 15:2)
- BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT—THE GOSPEL (1 Corinthians 15:3-7)
- OUR PAST DOESN'T DISQUALIFY US FROM GOD'S PRESENT AND FUTURE (1 Corinthians 15:8-10)
- WE MUST SHARE JESUS WITH OTHERS (1 Corinthians 15:11)

RESPOND & DISCUSS:

- Have you ever encountered someone who believed they were unforgiveable or unforgiven?
- Is there anything in your life you think is unforgiveable or unforgiven?
- What does it mean to you for your old self to die and be born to new life in Christ?
- How would you explain that to someone who's struggling with feeling unforgiveable?

- Do you know the Gospel as presented in the Bible? Do you believe the Gospel?
- How has the Gospel changed your life?
- What are some ways you hear people trying to change the Gospel?
- Are you willing to share the Gospel?
- What's your takeaway from this week's lesson?
- What is your "I will..." statement as you consider this week's teaching?
- How might your spiritual gifts help you in living it out?
- Who do you need to tell?
- How can the group help?