

Main Street Church - Life Group Guide

EASTER WEEKEND

Speaker: Shawn Vandop

Date: April 17, 2022




Connect

Romans 1:12 - *When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.*

1. EASTER OVER THE YEARS

- How did you or your family engage the Easter Weekend (Good Friday, Easter Sunday...)? Share highlights...
- Do you have any family or church traditions for the Easter season?
- How has your personal understanding and engagement with the Easter Story changed over the years?
(The Death & Resurrection of Jesus...)
- Which annual celebration carries more weight in your life and family, and why? Christmas or Easter?
Which carries more historical and spiritual significance, and why?

2. **OPEN UP** –  Read [Romans 6:3-5](#). Respond and open with Prayer.

Message Discussion

1. MESSAGE FEEDBACK

How were you *encouraged, challenged or changed* through the Good Friday & Easter Sunday Messages?

2. **WORD** -- Read  [1 Corinthians 15](#).

*As you share the reading of this Scripture, consider (and then discuss) these questions:

- What do we learn about *God, humanity, life, death, resurrection and eternity* through this passage?
- Why does the Resurrection of Jesus Christ carry so much weight for the Apostle Paul and the early Christians?
What should this mean for us as Christ-Followers today?
- How can we present and share the truth of this Gospel (Good News) to our culture, friends & family today?
How is it relevant and essential? How can we initiate, invite, and engage a conversation on this?

3. **PERSPECTIVE: *What Convinced James His Brother (Jesus) Was God?***

*Share the reading of this [article by Robby Lashua – Stand To Reason Ministries](#):

My brother isn't God. It's pretty obvious (we grew up together, after all), and nothing he could do or say could convince me of his divinity. I'm not God, either, and nothing I could do or say would convince him otherwise, too. Yet somehow, Jesus convinced his brother he was God. And James was so confident, he was willing to die for his belief. How did Jesus do it? What convinced his own brother to acknowledge Jesus was God and worship him?

Early on, James had a different opinion. When it came to his brother's bold claims, James was a skeptic. James, his brothers, and even his mother thought Jesus had "lost his senses" and showed up once when he was teaching "to take custody" of him ([Mk. 3:21](#)). Another time, Jesus' brothers told him to go to Judea, where the Jews were seeking to kill him ([Jn. 7:2-4](#)) since "not even his brothers were believing in him" ([Jn. 7:5](#)). "A prophet is not without honor," Jesus said, "except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household" ([Mk. 6:4](#)). During Jesus' public ministry, his brothers rejected his message, criticized him, and refused to follow him.

Later, after Jesus' ascension, we see these same family members in the upper room praying continually with the disciples

(Acts 1:14). What happened? What convinced Jesus' brothers to believe he was Messiah, become one of his disciples, and 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. 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 for James becoming convinced his older brother was God. 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" ([Is. 6:3](#)), is "without iniquity" ([Deut. 32:4](#)), and "speaks truth" ([Is. 45:19](#)). James also knew that the Messiah would be called "Mighty God" ([Is. 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 it. I can't count all the times my brother and I would cover for each other to escape punishment. We watched each other sin, we helped each other sin, and we knew each other's sin more than anyone else. So, even if my brother rose from the grave, I wouldn't believe he was God. Why? Because we grew up together. I guarantee you, he wasn't holy, holy, holy. Neither was I. The same goes for James. He, more than anyone else, had a front row seat to Jesus' life. James 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—Jesus' resurrection and the persuasive power of a sinless life. These two factors together compelled James to believe that Jesus, his brother, was God and convinced him 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 be enough to make him resent his goody-two-shoes brother, but not enough to worship him. James's conversion is compelling evidence that Jesus was both sinless and raised from the dead.

***Share your thoughts and feedback on this article. What did you learn? What encourages or challenges you?**

4. BIG IMPACT -- Read [John 11:25-26](#)

"Jesus's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about." "The message of Easter is that God's new world has been unveiled in Jesus Christ and that you're now invited to belong to it." — N.T. Wright

- a.** What are few ways the *Life, Death & Resurrection* of Jesus Christ has changed the history of the world?
- b.** What are a couple of ways that the *Life, Death & Resurrection* of Jesus Christ has changed you personally?
- c.** *Paul, James, Martha* and many others throughout history (including you & I) have had the opportunity to respond to JESUS. Who are 1 or 2 people in your life that need to come to faith in Jesus? *Let's pray for them together!*

Prayer

PRAY TOGETHER – *Pray for one another and the people you shared.*

PROJECT 3:15 – *Encourage your Life Group to sign up for our upcoming **Apologetics Conference** on Sat. April 30th.*

Visit www.mainstreetchurch.ca/project315 for Information and Registration.