

Life Group Homework

For the week of April 21, 2019

MY STORY

1. What do you traditionally do on Easter Sunday?
2. What was your takeaway from last week's study?

QUICK REVIEW

3. Upon reviewing your notes from Sunday's teaching, what caught your attention?

DIGGING DEEPER

1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...

4. According to this verse, what are we supposed to be prepared to do?
5. What does it mean to make a defense?
6. How are we supposed to present our defense?

This week we are going to do something a little different. We are going to be examining what is known as the "minimum historical evidence for the resurrection". These are 12 facts about the resurrection of Jesus that are widely accepted by Christian and non-Christian scholars. Many of these are also accepted by skeptics of the Christian faith. We will be unpacking some of these facts so that we can do what 1 Peter 3:15 suggests. We will have a clear reason based on history, not just on faith. I am not saying that faith is not important. I am suggesting that we have a great reason to believe what we believe because the resurrection of Jesus is the best conclusion for all of the evidence that will be presented. All of the 12 facts are found in the Bible (I have included some, but not all of the references that support these facts), but they are also found in other documents throughout history.

The 12 minimum historical facts about the resurrection of Jesus:

- Fact 1.** Jesus died by crucifixion. (Luke 23:46)
- Fact 2.** He was buried. (Luke 23:53)
- Fact 3.** The death of Jesus caused the disciples to despair and lose hope, believing that His life was ended. (Luke 23:13-24, Mark 16:7-8)

7. Why are these three facts important?

Fact 4. Although not as widely accepted, many scholars hold that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered to be empty just a few days later. (Mark 16:1-6)

8. Why is an empty tomb a big deal?

Fact 5. The disciples had experiences they believed were the literal appearances of the risen Jesus. (Luke 24:36-48)

Fact 6. The disciples were transformed from doubters, who were afraid to identify themselves with Jesus, to bold proclaimers of His death and resurrection. (Acts 2:14-46)

9. The word "believe" is in Fact #5 because skeptics don't want to admit the possibility that it could be true. What, if any, are other possible explanations for Facts 5 and 6?

10. Many claim that the disciples could have hallucinated. What is the problem with large group hallucinations?

Fact 7. This message was at the center of preaching in the early church. (1 Corinthians 15:1-8)

Fact 8. This message was especially proclaimed in Jerusalem, where Jesus died and was buried shortly before. (Acts 2:14-46)

Fact 9. As a result of this teaching, the church was born and grew. (Acts 2:37-41)

11. What is the significance of rapid church growth in the place where Jesus was crucified?

Fact 10. Sunday became the primary day of worship.

Fact 11. James, who had been a skeptic, was converted to the Christian faith when he also believed he had seen the resurrected Jesus. (1 Corinthians 15:7, James)

Fact 12. A few years later, Paul was converted by an experience that he likewise believed to be an appearance of the risen Jesus. (Acts 8:1-3, Acts 9:1-9, 1 Corinthians 15:1-8)¹

These last two facts are some of the most compelling. First, because James was the half-brother of Jesus, and a skeptic (see Matthew 12:47, Mark 3:32, Luke 8:20). Secondly, Saul (Paul) was a persecutor of the church. His conversion took place while on his way to imprison believers.

12. What would it take to convince a half-brother that Jesus was the Son of God?
13. In thinking about Paul, why is his conversion so powerful?
14. How hard is it to convince a person to change their deeply-held religious beliefs?

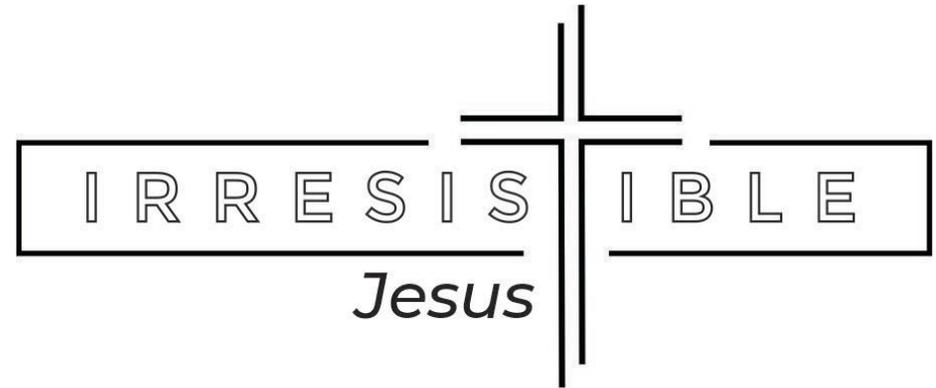
TAKING IT HOME

15. In thinking about these 12 Minimum Facts, what is the best explanation for them all?
16. Which one do you find most compelling to trust and why?
17. What is your takeaway for this week's study?

CHAIR TIME TOOL

This week, read through all the passages associated with the 12 Facts and answer the following questions.

18. Is there anything that I need to shift in my faith because of these?
19. How can I grow in my faith because of historical facts?



PASTOR CRAIG SWEENEY
April 20 & 21, 2019

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing..."

⁷ But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸ When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

⁹ "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.

¹⁰ When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!"

John 15:5-11

¹ Gary R. Habermas; Antony Flew. *Did the Resurrection Happen?: A Conversation with Gary Habermas and Antony Flew* (Veritas Books) (Kindle Locations 179-184). Kindle Edition.

Challenge:

- Will I remain in Him?