

Date:

PRAY Father, as I read and reflect on these words today, give me a deeper experience of the living Jesus.

READ 1 Corinthians 15

REFLECT

This is part of a letter written by Paul to the church in a city named Corinth. It had been several years since Jesus' death, and people were beginning to ask tough questions: Did his resurrection actually happen? Does it really matter if it did or not? If it did, what significance does it have for us now? Have you ever asked any of those same questions?

So how did Paul answer? He starts by giving his account of the resurrection (15:3–8) which includes all the facts we discovered in the four Gospels. Although Paul didn't go to the empty tomb himself that morning, he did have an encounter with the resurrected Jesus some time later (Acts 9:1–19). He also had another reliable source of information, one that is still available to us today: he studied the Scriptures (15:3,4). That's the best way to answer our questions about Jesus. Paul addresses two key issues:

The historical fact of the resurrection (15:12–34) That's still a big issue today. Some want to 'deconstruct' the Bible; others want to 're-interpret' what it says: 'Well... whether the tomb was empty or not isn't important. Just the idea of new life is inspirational.' 'Rubbish!' Paul shouts in response. Jesus was actually raised from the dead (15:20) and there were lots of eyewitnesses (15:5–8). Saying it didn't happen isn't inspirational; it's untrue and undermining of our entire faith (15:17–19). So cut it out!

The personal impact of the resurrection (15:35–58) In different ways, the Corinthians were asking, 'Okay, if there is such a thing as resurrection from the dead, how will affect me?' Paul does his best to describe our resurrection bodies (15:37–49) but, as he said earlier, 'now we see but a poor reflection' (1 Corinthians 13:12); we won't really know what it will be like until it happens. What we do know is that our spiritual bodies will be imperishable, glorious and powerful (15:42–44). That gives us a lot of hope – hope based on the fact of the resurrection (1 Peter 1:3).

APPLY For you, what is the most important thing about the resurrection of Jesus?

PRAY Father, increase my faith and hope in the fact of the resurrection of your Son, Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

After you've completed the five readings in this section, get together with another person or group to talk about the things you've learned. Begin by sharing the insights you gained from your own reflection on the passages. Then use the following questions to help you continue the conversation.

- 1 How are you responding to the great commission Jesus gave his followers? How do you share the good news about Jesus in your world?
- 2 Do you remember your reaction the first time you heard about the resurrection of Jesus? How has your understanding changed over the years?
- 3 How would you respond to a church leader who said, 'You can still be a good Christian and not believe that Jesus was literally raised from the dead. It just doesn't square with what we know about science today'?
- 4 Have you ever had a major misunderstanding about something in the Bible? What was it? How can you know if your understanding of the Bible is correct now?
- 5 Do you have any lingering questions about the resurrected Jesus? What are they? Does the Bible have any answers?