

## Dying to Live

1. Warm up: Share a favorite Easter memory.
2. Seven people were baptized last Sunday. Although it may seem unusual to baptize on Easter, in the earliest days of Christianity Easter was *the* principle time to baptize because of what baptism signifies. As Jeff said, “Baptism is what happens when Easter becomes personal.” Falling back into the water signifies that we are dying to an old way of life. Being submersed below the water signifies that we are burying that old way of life. Coming up out of the water signifies that we are rising up to a whole new way of living. Read Romans 6:3-11, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. Tell us about when, where, and how you were baptized. Was your experience of baptism meaningful to you? Why or why not?
  - b. What’s something you’ve had to die to in order to live a deeper life of faith?
  - c. What’s something you’ve had to rise to in order to live a deeper life of faith?
  - d. Do you feel more alive now than you did before you embraced an active faith in Christ? How would you explain it to someone? What makes you feel more alive?
  - e. Romans 6:5 says, “If we have been united with Jesus in a death like his [through baptism], we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” Put that verse in your own words. What do you hear it saying?
3. Easter is not just about something incredibly wonderful that happened to Jesus two thousand years ago. It’s also about something equally wonderful that can happen to us in the here-and-now. The scriptures tell us that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead can raise us up to a whole new level of living and being. We too can live with resurrection power. Ephesians 1:19-21. On Sunday, we explored what this means in three key steps. **No. 1 – Rising with Christ means embracing a new way of seeing eternity.**

Some people believe that, when we die, we get molecularly absorbed back into the infinite cosmos and cease to have any consciousness. Others believe that when our body dies, our soul lives on. Jeff suggested that, as thoughtful people, we should weigh the empirical evidence and let that determined our viewpoint. One critical piece of empirical evidence is the resurrection of Jesus. Take a look at the brief summary of the case for Jesus’ resurrection as presented on p. 3, then come back to the questions below.

- a. Some people dismiss all that the disciples experienced as mere hallucinations. Others find the testimony convincing. How do you weigh the evidence for Jesus’ resurrection? Do you find it convincing? Why or why not?

- b. The empirical evidence for resurrection – i.e., life after death – doesn't stop with Jesus and his disciples. Down through the ages, and in our own time, countless people have had encounters with loved ones after their death. Jeff shared the example of Kathryn Irene Michaels. She tells how her Dad appeared to her in vivid form after he died as she lay awake in her bed one night. She also tells of another occasion when he came to her and told her exactly when her family would move from the UK – then it happened exactly as he described. What do you make of stories like this? Have you ever experienced a brush with a departed loved one? Do you know others who have?
4. Jeff said, "If you ask me, there's just too much empirical evidence of the spirit world to deny it – too many human encounters with those who have departed earth." When we fully embrace this new way of seeing eternity, it inevitably leads to the second key point.
- No. 2 – Rising with Christ means embracing a new way of dying.**

- a. For us as believers, Jeff suggested that death is comparable to an arthropod shedding its exoskeleton. Arthropods outgrow their exoskeletons and have to shed them to continue growing and avoid death. Shedding their exoskeleton is a dramatic step in their process of becoming all they were meant to be. For believers, death is like that. It's the process by which our spirit sheds its exoskeleton – i.e., the body – so we can move into the next phase of our existence. Viewed this way, death is simply the last great test of our faith journey here on earth. It gives us the opportunity to have enough faith to peacefully surrender our spirit back to God just as Jesus did on the cross. Do you like this way of seeing death? Why or why not?
  - b. Take a look at the quote from Edicio de la Torre on p. 3. What are your thoughts?
  - c. Have you ever witnessed someone peacefully, willingly entrust their spirit back to God in death? Tell us about it.
5. Because Jesus' resurrection gives us a whole new way of seeing eternity and a whole new way of dying, it also gives us a whole new way of living in the present. **No. 3 – Rising with Christ means embracing a whole new way of life in the here-and-now.** Because death is not our end, but merely a transition into eternity, we are liberated to live courageous, bold, and generous lives. No need to hoard, no need to play it safe. We can afford to take risks and to freely give of ourselves.
- a. Of course, growing into this new way of living is a process. Two steps forward, one step backward. Tell us about something that's happened in your life recently where, looking back, you realize you were holding back when God was calling you boldly forward. How did that experience make you feel?
  - b. Tell us about something that's happened recently when you were, at least in that moment, able to embrace this new way of life characterized by courage, boldness, and generosity. How did that experience make you feel?

## **Romans 6:3-11**

<sup>3</sup>Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

<sup>5</sup>For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

<sup>6</sup>We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup>For whoever has died is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup>But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

<sup>9</sup>We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup>The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. <sup>11</sup>So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

### **A Brief Summary of the Case for Jesus' Resurrection**

The case for Jesus' resurrection rests on the eyewitness accounts of his disciples. The credibility of their testimony is reinforced by the impact what they experience had on them. After seeing Jesus tortured to death, the disciples were utterly disillusioned and skeptical – until they discovered an empty tomb and began to experience repeated, stunning encounters with Jesus in a resurrected form. Some of these encounters were when individuals were alone. But others were when several disciples were together. And others when a dozen or more were together. Once over 500 were together and saw and experienced Jesus' tangible presence. As a result, these disillusioned disciples were transformed into incredibly bold, passionate eye-witnesses who risked – and in some instances gave – their lives in order to testify to what they experienced.

### **Edicio de la Torre**

“If we look at our life as some precious treasure we must hoard, the demands made by others on our life are like losses. And death is a final loss, a final failure to hold on to our life. But if we look at our life as a treasure we must share, every service we give to others is a fulfillment of our life's purpose. And death is the final giving, the total giving [of ourselves back to God].”