

Alive with Christ

Summary and Goal

In 1 Corinthians 15 we see a quick summary of the gospel that highlights the good news of Christ's resurrection, the power of His resurrection, and the results of His resurrection, what it means for you and me today. Through this passage we get the heart of the story of Scripture: Jesus died and rose again to save sinners. The truths taught in this passage demand our attention as well as our affection as we are strengthened in our faith by thinking about the substitutionary life and death, resurrection, and return of Christ.

Session Outline

1. The Good News of Christ's Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-8)
2. The Power of Christ's Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:8-11)
3. The Result of Christ's Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-22)

Background Passage: 1 Corinthians 15

Session in a Sentence

The resurrection of Jesus is good news that changes lives and is the source of our hope for eternal life.

Christ Connection

The resurrection of Jesus represents the power of God to change lives and usher in the new world He has promised. Jesus' resurrection is the firstfruits of the future resurrection of His people, the guarantee that God's kingdom will come fully to earth, and the first nail in the coffin of death, which will one day be defeated forever.

Missional Application

Because we have been forgiven and our hope is in our future resurrection, we hold fast to the truth of Christ's resurrection and proclaim this good news as we await His return.

Group Time

GROUP MEMBER CONTENT

Group content found in the Daily Discipleship Guide is included in this shaded area throughout the session.

Introduction

EXPLAIN: Use the paragraph in the DDG (p. 61) to explain what CliffsNotes® books are and why they are useful.

As high school students, we were assigned to read the great classics in English literature from Shakespeare to Steinbeck. While I love to read now, at fifteen I did not. But friends at school told me about these magical yellow books called CliffsNotes®. I have no idea who Cliff was or why he was so insistent on such meticulous notetaking, but I am sure that he is the reason I passed English class. CliffsNotes summarize the plot of a two-hundred-page book in about twenty pages. So within a half-hour, you can know the major elements of a book's plot, the characters, and most of the questions that would be on a test. Summaries like CliffsNotes can be helpful. They're not as good as reading the whole book, but they are helpful.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



How might you summarize the whole story of the Bible in just a few words? *(be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)*

SUMMARIZE: In 1 Corinthians 15 we see a quick summary of the gospel that highlights the good news of Christ's resurrection, the power of His resurrection, and the results of His resurrection—what it means for you and me today. Through this passage we get the heart of the story of Scripture—a CliffsNotes version of the Bible, of sorts—Jesus died and rose again to save sinners. The truths taught in this passage demand our attention as well as our affection as we are strengthened in our faith by thinking about the substitutionary life and death, resurrection, and return of Christ.

The additional commentary for this session is included on page 154 in this Leader Guide.

For session-by-session training videos, please visit MinistryGrid.com/gospelproject.

For additional teaching options and other resources, please visit GospelProject.com/additional-resources.

Point 1: The Good News of Christ's Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-8)

READ: Ask a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 (DDG p. 62).

¹ Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me.

SAY: When Paul was in Corinth, he preached the gospel. Paul did not dream up this story; he heard it and believed it, and what he had received he turned around and told to anyone who would listen about who Jesus is and what He has done.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 62) to establish the basic truths of the gospel according to the apostle Paul. Then use the bullet points below to provide a fuller presentation of the gospel in light of the Bible's larger story.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul reminds his readers of the core gospel message. What is the gospel? The word *gospel* simply means “good news,” but biblically, it means something of ultimate importance: Christ died for our sins and was raised to life again, and this according to the Scriptures (vv. 3-4)—the “CliffsNotes” version of the gospel story.

- God, the eternal Creator of all things, created us for relationship with Him. Yet each of us has sinned against God, meaning we've chosen our way over God's way (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:23). Because God is holy—completely good and completely separate from evil—our sin separates us from God. God's righteous verdict for our sin is death and judgment (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3). Yet God sent His Son into the world to save us from this. Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, came to live a sinless life, die on the cross in our place, and rise from the grave that we might have eternal life and joy (Rom. 3:21-26; 1 Tim. 2:5-6).
- It was for us that Jesus bled and died. He hung upon the cross to atone for our sins: for every lust of our eyes, every curse of our tongue, every lie we have spoken, every jealousy we harbor, every trace of greed in our hearts. Jesus' sacrifice for us was deeply personal, and this is good news, as is His resurrection, which was corroborated by so many witnesses.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



How should we view and read the Old Testament in light of Paul's explanation of the gospel in this passage? (the Old Testament is instructive for us understanding the gospel; since the beginning, God was working out His gospel story for Jesus to come and accomplish our salvation; the Old Testament reveals the same loving and gracious God that we might be tempted to limit to the New Testament)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 62) to show how our faith response to the gospel has three facets: **past**, **present**, and **future**.

We deserve death for our sin, but by God's grace we are given eternal life. So how do we receive this incredible gift? By repentance toward God and faith in Jesus (Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21; Rom. 10:9-10). Just as with the Corinthians, the believer's faith response starts in the **past**, moves to the **present**, and looks ahead to the **future** (1 Cor. 15:1-2).

- **In the Past:** We received the gospel when we first heard the good news of Jesus Christ and believed. We heard who Christ was and that through Him alone we could be reconciled to God. The Holy Spirit drew our hearts to the truth. We repented and believed, and now we have become brand new people (2 Cor. 5:17).
 - **In the Present:** Right now, believers stand on the gospel. The gospel wasn't just the good news that our sins *were* forgiven; it's the good news that our sins *are* forgiven forever and that we have a restored relationship with God even now.
 - **In the Future:** We will be saved by the gospel. We are being saved not by what we do but by faith in what Christ has done. Christ's death and resurrection assures us that our sins are forgiven, that God is with us today, and that someday we will be with Him for eternity.
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INSTRUCT: Encourage group members to use the table in their DDG (p. 62) to reflect on their faith response to the gospel over the course of their lives, **past**, **present**, and **future**.

What are some details/thoughts you have about your response to the gospel?

IN THE PAST

IN THE PRESENT

IN THE FUTURE

Point 2: The Power of Christ's Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:8-11)

READ 1 Corinthians 15:8-11 (DDG p. 63).

⁸ Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹ Whether, then, it is I or they, so we proclaim and so you have believed.

SAY: Christ's resurrection is not just a story in a book of fairy tales; it connects to our daily lives. But it is also more than a moral for us to digest, ponder, and consider as we live. We are not merely to agree with the reality of Christ's resurrection; it's meant to impact us personally. The good news of Jesus changes us completely.

EXPLAIN: Reference the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 63) as you stress the role of God's grace in Paul's life that led him to become an apostle who carried forth the message of Jesus as the resurrected Messiah.

On the list of people Christ appeared to after His resurrection, Paul mentioned himself last. He witnessed the resurrection power of God when he saw a heavenly light and heard the risen Savior, and he recognized this powerful experience was the grace of God. Without grace, he would not have been a saved disciple, much less an apostle of Jesus.

- Paul didn't walk with Jesus before His resurrection. He even persecuted the church and oversaw the execution of at least one Christian before becoming a Christian himself (Acts 7:57–8:1). But one day, while Paul was headed to persecute Christians, Jesus came to Paul. A blazing light from heaven shone, and the voice of Jesus spoke to him. Paul's physical eyes were blinded, but his spiritual eyes were opened. He couldn't see the way forward, but he could finally see the redemption he had longed for (Acts 9:1-20). In that moment, everything changed.
- God's grace completely transformed Paul. The power of the resurrected Christ had changed him from the inside out. As a Pharisee, Paul had tried to earn the approval of God by keeping all of the rules, and he excelled in this (Gal. 1:14). But when he finally received God's grace, he went from being a person who hated Christ and the church to being a champion of Christ and His church.

Application: Some of us, like Paul, try to earn God's approval by keeping the rules. Others of us rebel against God by breaking His rules. Both paths end up at the same destination—in a real place called hell. Our good works cannot earn God's approval, and our bad works cannot keep us from God's saving grace in our resurrected Savior.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 What are some ways we might try to earn God's approval instead of resting in His grace? (church attendance; Bible reading and prayer; striving in our own power to do all the right things; shaming sinners)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 63) to comment on the significance that God's grace applies even to sinners like Paul: No matter what we have done, the gospel has the power to save and change sinners for eternity. Then *apply* this message by calling for any unbelievers in your group to believe in the gospel of our crucified and resurrected Savior.

No matter what you have done, what sins you've committed, for those who have received God's grace and believed in Christ, in His death and resurrection, your sins have been washed away by the blood of Jesus. If you want proof, just look to Jesus' empty grave and His resurrected body, witnessed physically by so many and spiritually by so many more. The resurrection story of Jesus is true, and it is powerful. This gospel has the power to save and to change sinners for eternity.



Voices from Church History

"This is the perfect and consummate glory in God: not to exult in one's own righteousness, but recognizing oneself as lacking true righteousness, to be justified by faith in Christ alone."¹

—Basil the Great (c. 329-379)

- On the cross, Jesus suffered and died so that the grave would lose its sting. Christ rose from the grave so that death would not have the final word. The empty grave marking Jesus' resurrection is a symbol of His victory over sin and death to accomplish our salvation.

Application: Paul clarified this good news for the benefit of his readers who already believed in Jesus. But if you hear the good news of the gospel ringing in your heart and you have not yet repented of your sin and trusted in Christ to forgive you, hear this loud and clear: There is only one way for you to find forgiveness of your sin and only one way that you can live past the grave in the presence of God. Repent of your sin and believe in Jesus Christ, who died and rose again. Do not let this moment pass you by. Right now, ask God to forgive you of your sins, and thank Him for sending Jesus to die in your place upon the cross. Believe in your heart that Christ was raised to life again, and also believe that even in death you will be raised with Him to eternal life.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 How has your life changed since coming to faith in Christ and believing in His death and resurrection? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

Point 3: The Result of Christ's Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-22)

READ 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 (DDG p. 64).

²⁰ But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. ²² For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 64) to elaborate on what it means that Christ's resurrection acts as the **firstfruits** of the future resurrection of all Christians.

The resurrection of Christ stands as the **firstfruits** of the resurrection for all Christians. Just as Christ was raised from the dead, we will live again after we die. Just as Christ was given a new body that will never decay or die, we'll also have bodies that will never die or sin or get sick (1 Cor. 15:50-58). All of this happens not by anything that we have done but through the work of one man—**Jesus Christ, the second and last Adam.**

- In ancient times, an Israelite farmer would take the **firstfruits** of a crop harvest and offer it to God in recognition of His blessing upon the earth (Lev. 23:9-14). This was a statement of faith that the harvest would continue. In the same way, resurrection of Jesus promises the future resurrection of His believers.

INSTRUCT: Provide group members with the answers for the table in their DDG (p. 64), which contrasts Adam and **Jesus, the second and last Adam.**

ADAM	JESUS CHRIST
The first man (Gen. 2:7)	The God-man (Luke 1:30-33)
Created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27)	The image of God (Col. 1:15)
From the earth, a man of dust (1 Cor. 15:47)	From heaven, a life-giving spirit (1 Cor. 15:45,47)
His sin brought death to all humanity (Rom. 5:12)	His sinless death brought life to all those who believe (Rom. 5:17)
His sin resulted in condemnation for all humanity (Rom. 5:16)	His perfect life resulted in justification for all who believe (Rom. 5:16)

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- The Scriptures teach us that through Adam’s sin, all humanity will die (Rom. 5). So every person born after Adam is sinful from birth, and as we’ve already considered, the penalty for sin is death (Gen. 2:17). This was the curse given to humanity because of sin (Gen. 3:19). If that were the end of the story, we’d have no hope. But there’s more. Just as one man brought death to all of us, another man brings life. Jesus’ death and resurrection results in forgiveness of sin, eternal life, and resurrection from the dead for those who believe. Everyone who calls out to God for salvation will not face the worst of death—eternal separation from God—but will receive eternal life (John 3:16). **Jesus is the true and better Adam.**
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EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 64) to point out that apart from the resurrection we would still be in our sins and unforgiven. Because of the resurrection, we are assured that we are free from the power of sin.

But what if there were no resurrection? What would we lose? Everything! If Jesus weren’t raised from the dead, then our sins couldn’t be forgiven (1 Cor. 15:12-19). Remember the sting, filth, and shame of your sin? Remember how hopeless you were without God? Because of the resurrection, we are assured that we have peace with God, and we’re set free from the power of sin by something even stronger—the power of the gospel.

- Paul wanted us to understand the link between Jesus’ resurrection and our hope. Because Jesus lives, we know that we too will live. Because Jesus defeated death, we know that death doesn’t have the final word over us. But as Paul says, if we only have hope in this life, then we should be pitied more than any other people in the world (1 Cor. 15:19). If death is the end and there is nothing else, then we too should say, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (v. 32). Instead, we are a people who hope in the promise of resurrection because our resurrection has been guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
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FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 64).

Life After Death: The Bible teaches that when a Christian dies, he or she immediately is with the Lord but awaiting the future **resurrection**. For those who are not in Christ, life after death results in being **separated** from Christ in a state of suffering, even though future **judgment** remains.

Essential Doctrine “Life After Death”: The Bible teaches that when a Christian dies, he or she immediately is with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8; Luke 23:43). This is what some people call an intermediate state, given that the final state for believers takes place at the future **resurrection** (Rev. 6:10-11). For those who are not in Christ, life after death results in being **separated** from Christ in a state of suffering, even though future **judgment** remains (Luke 16:19-31).

My Mission

EXPLAIN: Brothers and sisters, let us be filled with gospel-fueled hope, and let us not lose the vision of how important the resurrection of Christ is and what it means to us. We are a people who stand in the power of the resurrection, live in the light of the resurrection, and look forward to our own resurrection. We have an unshakable hope. This good news was proclaimed to us and we have believed. Someone spoke. Someone loved. Someone took the time to invest in us spiritually and invited us to taste and see that God is good. Likewise, every relationship God has given you with an unbeliever is so you can proclaim the gospel that they may believe. Our friends and neighbors and family need this same resurrection hope. They need to know about the hope we have in Jesus.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 65), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God's Word.

Because we have been forgiven and our hope is in our future resurrection, we hold fast to the truth of Christ's resurrection and proclaim this good news as we await His return.

- **How will you respond in faith to the good news of Jesus' resurrection?**
- **What are some ways your group can encourage one another with the truth of the resurrection to live in grace and obey God's call on your lives?**
- **With whom will you share the good news of Jesus that they might believe and be saved?**

Voices from the Church

"'Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die' is a sham. The alternative is not a refusal to eat, drink, or be merry. That would be ingratitude. Instead, with the resurrected Jesus we sing out, 'Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for yesterday we were dead.'"²

—Russell Moore

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Our glorious and Triune God, apart from Jesus' resurrection our faith is futile and we are dead in our sins. But thank You for rescuing us from sin's penalty and power through the head of the new humanity, Jesus Christ, the second and last Adam. Move us by the life-giving Spirit to announce to the world that Jesus has risen and believers will be raised in Christ because of this most important historical reality. Amen.

PACK ITEM 7: FIRSTFRUITS: Cut out these bookmarks and pass them out to group members to remind them of the distinction between Adam and Jesus and how we only find our hope for resurrection in Jesus.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the **Daily Study** devotions in their DDG (pp. 66-68), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use **Encourage One Another** (p. 69) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God's Word.

Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The **Daily Study** devotions in the DDG (pp. 66-68) will help group members get into God's Word and study it for themselves. **Encourage One Another** (p. 69) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 66-68) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for **Day 2** as a part of point 2 in the session: **Grace is not merely for our forgiveness from sin; grace is our drive and strength for the gospel work.**



Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God's Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- **Day 1:** "We can never move past the gospel; we only grow deeper in it."
- **Day 5:** "Scripture teaches that we are inheritors of an 'Adam,' either the first Adam or the last Adam."



Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God's Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member's DDG (p. 69) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using *The Gospel Project* in their groups.

- **Encourage group members to discuss why it is important that our faith and salvation rests upon a well-attested historical event in Jesus' resurrection.**
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.

Additional Commentary

Easter Session: Alive with Christ

Point 1: The Good News of Christ's Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-8)

“The gospel is not only something we embrace at the beginning of the Christian life (‘which you received’; v. 1), but the source of strength throughout the Christian life (‘in which you stand’; v. 1; cf. 10:12-13; 16:13) ... Paul summarizes the content of the gospel in terms of Christ’s death, burial, resurrection, and post-resurrection appearances. The fact that Jesus died ‘for our sins’ (v. 3) reminds us both of our need and of Jesus’ atoning work, as nothing short of God’s Son enduring divine judgment in our place could redeem us. The phrase ‘in accordance with the Scriptures’ (vv. 3-4) teaches us that Christ’s work fulfills God’s saving purposes, implying that all of Scripture points us ultimately to the grace of God in Christ. Jesus’ burial confirms that he really died, and his appearances to eyewitnesses confirm that he truly rose. Thus we are not building our lives on myth or legend when we look to him for grace to pardon our sins and empower holy living.”³

Point 2: The Power of Christ's Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:8-11)

“Because he was the last to see the risen Lord, Paul describes himself as *the least of the apostles*, and feels that, because he had *persecuted the church of God*, he is also most undeserving of the title of apostle (15:9). He recognizes, however, that his past sin is covered by the *grace of God* and, in gratitude, he has *worked harder than all of them* (15:10). He has traveled more, suffered more opposition and founded more churches (2 Cor. 11:22-29), but Paul knows that it is only through *the grace of God that was with him* that anything had been accomplished.”⁴

Point 3: The Result of Christ's Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-22)

“Paul presents a parallel of necessary effects. Through one man, **Adam**, death came to humanity. If this is ever to be reversed, it must be done through like kind: a man. God has appointed just such a man: Jesus Christ, who is fully divine and fully human. Through his resurrection the promise of resurrection comes to a new humanity ‘in Christ.’ The second occurrence of the word **all** refers to all those who are joined to Christ through faith.”⁵

References

1. Basil, *On Humility* 20, quoted in 1–2 Corinthians, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VII in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Russell D. Moore, *Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 75.
3. C. D. (Jimmy) Agan III, “1 Corinthians,” in *Gospel Transformation Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 1548, n. 15:1-11.
4. Finny Philip, “1 Corinthians,” in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1580.
5. F. Alan Tomlinson, “1 Corinthians,” in *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2017), 1833, n. 15:21-22.

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Trevin Wax

General Editor—*The Gospel Project*

AUTHOR OF MULTIPLE BOOKS, INCLUDING

This Is Our Time: Everyday Myths in Light of the Gospel

With this volume of *The Gospel Project*, the storyline of the Bible shifts from the Old Testament to the New, and we enter the era in which God begins to fulfill His promise of salvation through the person and work of Jesus Christ. In the sessions that follow, you'll take a closer look at the context surrounding the birth of Jesus, the theological parallels between Adam and Jesus (the last Adam), as well as the early ministry of Jesus.

Some of these stories will be familiar to you and the rest of your group—the Christmas story, for example, or the story of Jesus' temptation. In the familiar stories, we want to help you see aspects of the Gospel accounts that you may have overlooked. In the less familiar stories, we want to help you see the beauty of Jesus' interaction with all kinds of people with all kinds of needs and all kinds of backgrounds.

Our hope as you study the Scriptures is that you will be drawn to worship Jesus as the Savior and Lord who fulfills God's original intention for us as His people. Here we see a Jesus withstanding temptation, calling disciples, loving the unlovable, and battling the evil one. May your worship of this Savior lead you to faithful obedience to His call in extending grace and mercy and the message of salvation to those around you.

EDITOR