

**INTRO**

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*“I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as an historian that*

*this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history.*

*Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.” ~ British author, H. G. Wells*

Two thousand years after a rural carpenter was executed by Roman authorities, people still talk about him. Jesus of Nazareth is still a compelling figure who is attractive to all types of people. While you sometimes hear people claim Jesus is just a myth or legend, the consensus among even secular historians and critics of Christianity is that he really existed and that his life and revolutionary teachings sparked the religion that bears his name. Why is Jesus so compelling?

Of course, Christians would say Christ is compelling because he’s God incarnate, and that claim is foundational to Christianity. Orthodox Christian belief teaches that God is triune — one God who is Father, Son and Spirit. The story of God coming to earth as a man to die for our sins and rescue us from his judgment is both beyond our human experience and sounds too good to be true. This [video from The Bible Project](https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/god-video/) explores the complex identity of Jesus being both God and a man (8:09).

In order to address our question for this week, “Is Jesus Really God?” we’re going to look at how the Gospels portray Jesus as God and consider some objections to that belief. Then we have a choice to make, because Jesus doesn’t allow us to examine his life without deciding who we think he is.

Week 5 | Is Jesus Really God?

Some critics of Christianity will deny that Jesus intended to be thought of as God. It’s true that the writers of the Gospels don’t record a statement in which Jesus says, “I am God,” but many of the things he said and did, when examined in context leave no doubt that Jesus was making that claim. The fingerprints of his divinity are everywhere in the Gospels. Our goal this week is to look at the many ways Jesus is portrayed as God in the Gospels. Find someone this week with whom you can have a meaningful conversation to see what they have to say about Jesus.

**Day 1**

**Before You Begin**

# As you pray this week seeking to understand Jesus as both God and man, consider when Moses asked to see God’s glory. God replied to Moses saying, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence” (Exodus 33:19).

# There were limits to what Moses, a mere man, could withstand being in the presence of God. Then in the Gospels we see Jesus portrayed as the visible earthly presence of the glory of God. Each day this week, ask God to help you comprehend his desire to be in relationship with you that he would take on flesh, experience all that we can feel, and now offers to have his Spirit dwell in you (1 Corinthians 3:16).

**Read the Word**

To the Roman world Jesus was a first century craftsman and itinerant teacher from an insignificant town in a nowhere province of the Empire. Yet each Gospel writer, from the very start of their work shows us how exceptional Jesus is. The most poetic and dramatic opening comes from John. Echoing the first lines of Genesis, “In the beginning, God created…” John shows us that Jesus is more than remarkable — he is God in the flesh.

[John 1:1–5, 14](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Jn1.1)

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was with God in the beginning. 3Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John makes some stunning claims about Jesus. He doesn’t use the names Jesus Christ or the Son of God, but calls him the *Logos*, translated here as the Word. John explains that the Word was “with God” implying both a relationship between the members of the Trinity and a oneness of being. John makes it clear that the eternal *Logos* became human — truly human. Incarnation is the theological term used to express this idea, and it is as central to the Christian faith as Jesus’ divinity.

Verse 14 says that the Word came in the flesh “and made his dwelling among us.” At the time of Moses, when the Israelites were wandering in the desert, God ordered the construction of a tabernacle in which he could reveal his presence. John is echoing back to those days while proclaiming Jesus is God’s presence in the form of a human being. Glory that can be seen, heard and touched. Amazing.

Jesus is the glory of God revealed to us in a person who smiled, laughed and welcomed little children to come and talk to him. He mourned death and cried over rejection. He got angry at sin and injustice. God and man.

**Ask Yourself**

How hard is it to believe God could maintain his God-ness while also being fully human? While the claims of John are mind blowing, there can be no doubt that he is introducing Jesus Christ as God incarnate. He is more than a prophet like Mohammad or a great teacher like Confucius or Buddha. Jesus was all the glory, goodness, mercy and truth of God in the flesh.

* What all did John claim about Jesus in today’s passage? *Take time to make a list.* How would I explain these to someone else?
* What is comforting to me to think about Jesus as God in flesh?
* What difference does it make in my life to accept Jesus is God compared to recognizing other religious leaders such as Mohammad, Confucius and Buddha or legendary characters like King Arthur and Paul Bunyan?

**Ask God**

Spend time in conversation with God and prepare your heart to listen. Follow these prompts to discuss today’s passage and focus with him:

* How can you be God over everything and still have existed as a human on earth?
* Why is it important for me to accept that you came to earth as a man?
* Why was it important to you to come dwell among us?

**Ask a Friend**

Pray for an opportunity to start a meaningful conversation on this topic today:

* Have you ever wished you could be in two places at once? What did you need to accomplish that you needed two of you?
* I’ve heard people say that God can be everywhere at the same time. What do you think about that?
* I was reading in the Bible that Jesus was God in the flesh. How do you think he still kept the world spinning while he was also living on it?

**Day 2**

Because of social media and online gaming, we can choose lots of screen names and avatars to represent us, and most people are fairly thoughtful about what they pick. Our birth names are something our parents give us, but we choose these other names to represent us in the online world.

Jesus is known by many names in the New Testament. Yesterday we considered what it meant that John introduces him as “The Word.” Today we will focus on three of Jesus’ names that help us see that he is far more than a wise man or prophet, but God incarnate.

**Before You Begin**

Review this [list of the Names of God](https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/misc/name_god.cfm). What is on your mind and heart today? Do you need reminded he is all-sufficient, healer, provider, peace, or present with you? Call on him by name in relation to your need.

**Read the Word**

Understanding that Jesus is the ***Son of God*** is critical to understanding his identity. Jesus often implied that he had a deep connection to the Father, who the Jews would have understood to be God. He spoke of being sent by the Father and of doing the Father’s will. But he also spoke of being one with the Father. Consider this interaction between Jesus and his disciples during their last supper.

John 14:8–10

8 Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

9 Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? **10**Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

The title ***Son of Man*** demonstrates an important claim to Jesus’ divinity. If you watched the [video](https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/god-video/) recommended in the Intro this week, you understand how [Daniel 7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv2011/Da7.13) refers to “a son of man” and why the Jews would recognize this name. “Son of Man” is seen quite a bit in the first three Gospels. Jesus used it 88 times to refer to himself, the most often of any other name. While on the surface this title might seem to emphasize Jesus’ humanity, it actually does the opposite by stressing his divinity. It was Jesus’ claim to divinity that caused the Jewish leaders to call for his execution. Consider this exchange from Jesus’ trial:

[Matthew 26:64–65](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Mt26.64)

**63**But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

**64**“You have said so,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

**65**Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. **66**What do you think?”

“He is worthy of death,” they answered.

In our last passage today, we see Jesus call himself the name devout Jews would not utter or even write: **I AM**. John 8 is the climax of a vigorous argument with a group of religious leaders. As the conflict escalates, Jesus sates, “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins” (John 8:24) The Pharisees ask “who are you?” but Jesus doesn’t answer directly.

[John 8:54–58](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Jn8.31-59)

**54**Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. **55**Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. **56**Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

**57**“You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

**58**“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” **59**At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

Not until Jesus says “before Abraham was born, I am” did they try to execute him. Stoning was a punishment for blasphemy in the Old Testament (Leviticus 24:13–16). Saying he existed before Abraham was a wild claim, but what sent people over the edge was Jesus employing the divine name, “I am”. This is the name God gave to Moses when he asked who he should say sent him to lead the Israelite slaves out of Egypt. “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14). Now Jesus is claiming the divine name for himself as he will deliver all people from slavery to sin.

**Ask Yourself**

Who do I say Jesus is? In addition to the names we’ve examined so far, the Bible also refers to Jesus as Lord, Savior, Shepherd, Teacher, Prince of Peace... Each name reveals something more of his character and compassion. There was so much more to Jesus than a man who lived and taught and died.

* What do the various names of Jesus mean to me?
* When have I felt like Phillip in the passage from John 14? How much is “enough” for my belief?
* How does the use of these three names by Jesus show that he is God?

**Ask God**

Spend time in conversation with God and prepare your heart to listen. Follow these prompts to discuss today’s passage and focus with him:

* Are my thoughts, words or actions ever blasphemous – insulting or irreverent toward you? If so, how, and will you please forgive me?
* Why did Jesus use the name Son of Man most often to describe himself?
* What do you want me to know about you through the name you gave to Moses, “I AM”?

**Ask a Friend**

Pray for an opportunity to start a meaningful conversation on this topic today:

* What are some nicknames you’ve been called? Who gave them to you? What did they mean? Which ones did you like the best? Why?
* I was reading in the Bible about all the different names Jesus was called…Shepherd, Teacher, Son of God, Son of Man, Savior, etc. Why do you think there were so many? Which name represents who you believe Jesus was?

**Day 3**

Let’s imagine you’ve been stranded on a desert island for twenty years and are finally discovered. In honor of your amazing survival and rescue, a celebratory banquet is going to be held, and the President at that time will be attending. You’ve never seen a picture and don’t know any other details, except maybe a name you’ve been told. How would you recognize the person you’re going to meet? You could look for clues! Presidents tend to carry themselves a certain way and are usually surrounded by Secret Service. Other people act differently around them, too. It often begins as soon as the President enters the room. You just know.

The Gospels are littered with clues that point to Jesus’ divinity. From the way he entered the world accompanied by a chorus of angels, to the things he did and said to the way people responded to him, it’s clear from the Gospel accounts that Jesus is God. We’re going to look briefly at some of those clues today.

**Before You Begin**

Praise God that he has made a way for us to know him and to talk to him. Thank him that as you attempt to understand what is beyond your understanding, he listens faithfully and waits patiently.

**Read the Word**

Our first clue is the way Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. The descriptions of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53 bear a striking resemblance to Jesus. In the New Testament Matthew quotes verse 4 in [Matthew 8:16–17](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Mt8.16-17) when Jesus heals a demon-possessed man. Written hundreds of years before Jesus lived, these verses predict the means by which Jesus’ death would redeem humanity. Read this small section and consider the connections to Jesus and the gospel.

[Isaiah 53:4–6](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Is53.4)

4Surely he took up our pain

and bore our suffering,

yet we considered him punished by God,

stricken by him, and afflicted.

5But he was pierced for our transgressions,

he was crushed for our iniquities;

the punishment that brought us peace was on him,

and by his woundswe are healed.

6We all, like sheep, have gone astray,

each of us has turned to our own way;

and the Lord has laid on him

the iniquity of us all.

The second clue we’ll consider today is the authority with which Jesus taught. When Jesus gave commands, he did not speak like the Old Testament prophets who, because they only represented God said, “So says the Lord,” but instead presents the command as his own. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives a series of commands that start with “you have heard it said” and then references an Old Testament law. He contrasts that law with a new command issued by Jesus himself. Consider this example, Jesus wasn’t just interpreting or teaching the Law to the people, he was expanding it in a way that only God had the authority to do.

[**Matthew 5:21**](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Mt5.21)

*You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’**But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.*

Of course, the other thing that drew people to Jesus were his miracles of compassion. Throughout history God has given his prophets the power to do miracles, so the acts themselves do not mean Jesus is God. But as you read the account below, consider how they verify his claims.

[Mark 2:1–12](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Mk2.1-12)

**1**A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. **2**They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. **3**Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. **4**Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. **5**When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

**6**Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, **7**“Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

**8**Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? **9**Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? **10**But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, **11**“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” **12**He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

It was “a much easier thing to heal the body than to restore the soul, for even a prophet might heal, while no mere prophet could ever forgive sins; but the scribes, with their incessant demands for visible signs, were unlikely to see this.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Others, however, recognized that they’d witnessed a true miracle and thanked God for it.

**Ask Yourself**

Am I comfortable saying Jesus was a prophet or teacher? Some may be able to accept the historical facts that there was a man named Jesus who walked the earth. They may even accept he was known for wise teachings. But to take that next step and accept he is God is a leap of faith they cannot make.

* What do I believe about the man Jesus fulfilling prophecies from the Old Testament of a promised savior to come? We looked at the one in Isaiah; refer to this [chart listing more examples](https://www.gotquestions.org/prophecies-of-Jesus.html).
* If I accept Jesus as God, I would have to accept his authority over all things, including me. In what areas do I allow him to have authority in my life? What in my life do I need to submit to his authority?
* What kind of impact did Jesus’ miracles have on those around the situation? What kind of impact would they have on me if I witnessed one today?

**Ask God**

Spend time in conversation with God and prepare your heart to listen. Follow these prompts to discuss today’s passage and focus with him:

* How do I recognize your presence? What are the clues you give me every day that you are present and active in my life?
* Today as I read the passage from Matthew 5 it talked about being angry. Help me understand what that means. How do you react to the anger I sometimes feel?
* What miracles are you still doing today? Why does it seem like we don’t experience as many miracles as people did when Jesus was on earth?

**Ask a Friend**

Pray for an opportunity to start a meaningful conversation on this topic today:

* Aren’t you glad other people can’t read your mind? When have you thought something and caught yourself before it came out of your mouth? What would happen if people knew what you were thinking?
* I was reading in the Bible that when Jesus was on earth he knew what people were thinking. What do you think Jesus would have to say about the things you think about? Does what he might think matter to you? Why or why not?

**Before You Go**

ExploreGod.com is a tremendous resource because it contains articles and videos that cover topics we don’t have time to address in the Engage God Daily. Some people wonder if there are any other sources that mention Jesus besides the Bible or how his teachings differ from other religious leaders.

* In the article “[The Historical Jesus](https://www.exploregod.com/articles/the-historical-jesus)” Dr. David Capes discusses some historical documents and what their significance is.
* Matt Shores provides a helpful comparison between Christianity and other world religions in the article “[How is Jesus Different](https://www.exploregod.com/articles/how-is-jesus-different)?”

**Day 4**

“It was tough, but we got out there and gave 110% to get it done!” It could be an athlete commenting on their team’s victory, engineers talking about an amazing feat of construction, or a manager commending his employees. We use the mathematical expression to show it’s more than what’s expected. But if the waiter at your favorite restaurant fills your glass to 110% with water, you may not be celebrating.

As we consider Jesus being God this week, it may be challenging to comprehend something outside of what our laws of physics tell us is possible. Could Jesus be 100% God and 100% man…a 200% God-man?

**Before You Begin**

Review this [list of the Attributes of God](https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/attributes.cfm). As you read through the list, thank him for the characteristics that help you understand who he really is.

**Read the Word**

What would you expect a “God-man” to be like? For the fullness of God to dwell in a human, there would need to be evidence of both natures – incorruptible goodness and power along with human emotions and senses. The Gospels tell us Jesus wept after the death of his friend Lazarus and was hungry after fasting for forty days. Those are evidence of humanity. Consider these verses that summarize the beliefs and teachings that came from those who experienced the “God-man” first-hand:

[Colossians 1:15-20](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Col1.15) (NLT)

***15Christ is the visible image of the invisible God****.  
    He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation,****16****for through him God created everything  
    in the heavenly realms and on earth.  
He made the things we can see  
    and the things we can’t see—  
such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world.  
    Everything was created through him and for him.****17****He existed before anything else,  
    and he holds all creation together.****18****Christ is also the head of the church,  
    which is his body.  
He is the beginning,  
    supreme over all who rise from the dead.  
    So he is first in everything.****19For God in all his fullness  
    was pleased to live in Christ****,****20****and through him God reconciled  
    everything to himself.  
He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth  
    by means of Christ’s blood on the cross.*

[Hebrews 1:1-3](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Heb1.1-14)

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. 3**The Son is the radiance of God’s glory** and **the exact representation of his being**, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

**Ask Yourself**

Just because I can’t experience it myself, does that make it unbelievable? The New Testament is filled with writings from those who were willing to stake their lives on the fact that Jesus had equal status with God but set aside the privileges of deity to take on the status of a human (adapted from Philippians 2:5-8 of The Message).

* The early believers held such deep convictions about Jesus being God. Do I have any personal experiences that deepen my belief? If so, what are they?
* What can I know about the characteristics of Jesus? What kind of Jesus am I looking for? Why is it important to me that he be a certain way?
* As a believer, how does wrestling with the belief that Jesus was fully God and fully man help me lead others to trust it too?

**Ask God**

Spend time in conversation with God and prepare your heart to listen. Follow these prompts to discuss today’s passage and focus with him:

* Since Jesus experienced life as a human, how does that help you relate to my feelings and pain?
* From the passages today, what do you want me to know about you? How does knowing this about you strengthen my relationship with you?
* What can I say and do in my day-to-day life to demonstrate the depths of my belief in you?

**Ask a Friend**

Pray for an opportunity to start a meaningful conversation on this topic today:

* In today’s world of “fact-checking” how do you determine what you believe to be true?
* What kind of evidence do you need when something seems completely unbelievable? If you can’t have evidence, does that mean it isn’t possibly true?
* I was reading in the Bible about what people in those times believed about Jesus – that he was a human and also fully God. Why do you think that was so important to them? Is that something you could believe? Why or why not?

**Before You Go**

Consider what C.S. Lewis says in his book, *Mere Christianity*:

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

Based on Lewis’ writing, we have to either dismiss Jesus entirely as a ***liar*** or a ***lunatic***, or we have to consider that his claims are true, and that he is ***Lord***.

**Day 5**

All the evidence we have looked at this week – Jesus’ miracles, teachings and claims – are impressive. But if his bones are lying in some tomb underneath modern Jerusalem, then he couldn’t possibly have been God. An eternal, infinite God couldn’t possibly be defeated by death. This is why the resurrection is absolutely essential to Christianity.

Every Gospel spends more time on the crucifixion and resurrection than any other time in Jesus’ life. The sacrificial death and miraculous resurrection of Christ were the means by which God could save humanity. This is the message the Gospels spread and that billions of people over the centuries have believed.

**Before You Begin**

Lift up this ancient prayer adapted from the Book of Common Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace:

So clothe me in your Spirit that I, reaching forth my hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you;

for the honor of your Name, Amen.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Read the Word**

Let’s start by taking a look at the record of the empty tomb in Mark and then pick up the account in Matthew.

[Mark 16:1–8](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Mk16.1-8)

**1**When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. 2Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?”

4But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. 5As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

6“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”

8Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

[Matthew 28:8–15](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Mt28.9)

8So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. 10Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

*11While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. 12When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, 13telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ 14If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” 15So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.*

Creating doubt in the physical resurrection of Jesus is common among critics and skeptics, and from the last verse in Matthew’s passage we see it began immediately. Let’s examine a few reasons people give for rejecting the resurrection:

* Many claim it was a hoax perpetuated by Jesus’ followers, yet most of the Apostles were beheaded, burned, beaten or also crucified. Would you be willing to die for a lie that would not gain you money, notoriety or power?
* A more recent critique says the Apostles comforted themselves after the execution by believing Jesus was with them “in spirit” and over time a legend grew that he was physically resurrected. So what do we make of the claims of so many different eyewitnesses? People who record legends don’t invite fact-checking as Paul wrote to the church in Corinth about 50 years later:

[**1 Corinthians 15:3–6**](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/1Co15.3)

*3For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.*

* Others question the credibility of the Gospels based on the accounts themselves, yet the details seem to make the truth more convincing. Who would make women key witnesses when their culture didn’t even recognize their testimony as admissible in court? Wouldn’t you make the future leaders of your organization look more inspiring than men who ran and hid? Above all, wouldn’t you get your stories straight so everyone gave an identical account of what happened?

**Ask Yourself**

Where does that leave us? There is much more that could be said in defense of the resurrection, but ultimately all Christians can do is present evidence, because you can’t prove history. Despite the evidence in the Gospels, if people are going to dismiss the resurrection because it was a miraculous event, then they are doing so because they have an intractable bias against the supernatural, not because the history fails to support it.

* How would I have responded to news of the resurrection if I lived at that time? What doubts have I had about the resurrection? How do they impact my belief that Jesus is God?
* Whether I accept it as true or not, how would I explain to someone else why the resurrection of Jesus is essential to Christianity?
* Of all the evidence I’ve examined this week for Christ’s divinity, what is most compelling? Why?
* What thoughts or questions do I still have about the divinity of Jesus? Who could I talk to? What resources would I find helpful?

**Ask God**

Spend time in conversation with God and prepare your heart to listen. Follow these prompts to discuss today’s passage and focus with him:

* Why would Jesus keep the scars from his crucifixion once he was resurrected? What should that mean to me?
* In the passages today, the women were reassured, “Don’t be alarmed,” and “Don’t be afraid.” Like them, I can become “bewildered” or confused when I try to understand the perplexity of your incarnation and resurrection. Can you reassure me?
* If I believe in you, why is it important for me to also believe in the things I’ve studied about Jesus this week?

**Ask a Friend**

Pray for an opportunity to start a meaningful conversation on this topic today:

* Have you ever lost anyone really close to you? What was your relationship with them like? How have you dealt with the loss?
* What do you think happens to us after we die? How did you come to believe that?
* I was reading in the Bible about when some women went to the place where Jesus was buried after he was crucified, and they were told he had come back to life. Do you believe Jesus really died and was resurrected? Why do you think it’s so important to Christians that he came back to life? Would you like to hear what I believe?

**Additional Resources**

The following books may be a good resource for yourself or to discuss with a friend:

* Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christ: A Journalist’s Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.
* Keller, Timothy. *The Reason for God: Belief in the Age of Skepticism.* New York: Penguin, 2008.
* Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. London: Fount, 1997.
* Wright, N.T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church.* New York: Harper Collins, 2008.

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*If you want deeper study, the links for each set of verses will direct you to the notes found in the* [*Faithlife Study Bible*](https://faithlife.com/products/faithlife-study-bible/app)*, a free web app in your browser or mobile app available for iOS, Android, or Kindle Fire.*

1. R. Alan Cole, Mark: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Book of Common Prayer, bcponline.org, 101.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)