

# HE IS RISEN



## ***Look at the facts. Jesus is alive!***

In the courtroom, only two things matter: the evidence and the testimony of witnesses. Hearsay doesn't count. Opinions don't count. Just the evidence and eyewitness testimony.

On the surface, the resurrection of Jesus—a dead man coming to life after three days—sounds just as outlandish as some of the tabloid headlines we read at the supermarket. Yet untold millions of people have believed that story and grounded their lives and hope in it.

Why?

The answer is as simple as it is profound: evidence and eyewitness testimony.

Jesus has risen from death, and He is alive. Massive evidence points to the reality of this event, including hundreds of people who saw Jesus after He came out of the tomb. We're only going to scratch the surface of this evidence as we study Luke 24 together. Even so, it will be clear that—yes, as sensational as it sounds—Jesus is alive!



### *Derwin L. Gray*

Derwin L. Gray is the founding and lead pastor of Transformation Church, a multi-ethnic community with two campuses in South Carolina. Previously, Derwin played for the NFL, and it was during his time with the Indianapolis Colts that He encountered the risen Christ. He and his wife, Vicki, have two children. He is the author of *Crazy Grace for Crazy Times*.



SPECIAL FOCUS

HE IS RISEN



*When have you been completely surprised?*

**QUESTION #1**

#BSFLrisen

## THE POINT

*The resurrection of Jesus is a fact you can build your life on.*



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Pain, doubt, and disappointment. We've all struggled with these at one time or another. I'm sure we've all faced those moments when the world just seemed to go dark—when we had no idea what would happen next or what we should do to help the situation.

In Luke's gospel, we read an account of a group of women who felt just such doubt and disappointment. They trudged on to do what needed to be done in spite of their feelings—but they were caught off guard and joyfully surprised by what happened next. Jesus was alive, and that changed everything.

Jesus is still alive, and that changes everything for us, too. In those moments when despair and doubt arise, we can respond with hope and rise up with the risen Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus is solidly grounded in fact. In the midst of your pain, doubt, and disappointment, His resurrection meets your life in surprising ways. Are you ready to discover how?

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## ***Luke 24:1-6a***

**<sup>1</sup> On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. <sup>2</sup> They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. <sup>5</sup> In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? <sup>6a</sup> He is not here; he has risen!**

All across the world—any place where Christians gather—Easter is a time of great celebration. But that first Sunday morning after Jesus’ crucifixion was anything but a happy moment for His disciples. It was a day of death, doubt, and disappointment.

Jesus died a brutal, shameful death as a public spectacle. In the Roman culture of the first century, crucifixion was so heinous that well-to-do Romans wouldn’t even mention it in public. The disciples had witnessed Jesus’ excruciating death, and all they could do was grieve.

Jesus died mere hours before the Jewish Sabbath began. With sundown quickly approaching, all Jesus’ followers could do was to wrap His body and place it in a tomb. When sundown came, darkness filled the night sky—and another kind of darkness filled their minds. The One they had pinned all their hopes on was dead.

With the first rays of sun on Sunday morning, a group of women including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James (see Luke 24:10) went to Jesus’ tomb with spices to prepare His body for burial. This was a ritual typically carried out by women, which included washing the body and anointing it with oil. They also planned to wrap Jesus’ body in strips of linen cloth as a sign of respect.

***What are some ways our culture tries to explain away Jesus’ resurrection?***

**QUESTION #2**

Despite their plans, the women were in for a big surprise: the tomb was empty. They found no body. Luke described the women as “wondering,” meaning they were mentally at a loss and saw no way to a solution. But two men who suddenly appeared explained what the women could not: “He is not here; he has risen!”

How do we know Jesus is alive? His tomb is empty! People have tried to explain away the resurrection, but we can’t explain away an empty tomb. Had Jesus’ body been stolen, or if the women had simply gone to the wrong tomb, the idea of a resurrection would have been rejected by going to the right tomb or by producing Jesus’ dead body. That didn’t happen.

Similarly, if Luke was trying to invent something that didn’t happen, he most likely would have identified some of Jesus’ apostles as the first witnesses to the empty tomb—some of the men. Why? At that time, a women’s testimony wasn’t valid in court, which made them less than ideal as witnesses. But Luke stuck to the facts: Jesus’ tomb was empty, and the women were the first witnesses to it.

## **Luke 24:6b-8**

**<sup>6b</sup> Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: <sup>7</sup> ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’”**

**<sup>8</sup> Then they remembered his words.**

The empty tomb should not have been a surprise to these women—or to any of Jesus’ followers. The angels reminded them that Jesus had repeatedly predicted both His death and His resurrection.

Jesus knew the cross was coming. That’s another fact recorded multiple times in Scripture, which lends further credibility to the historical fact of the resurrection.



***Why is it significant that Jesus knew in advance what would happen to Him?***

**QUESTION #3**

Look at what else this fact reveals:

- ▶ **Jesus' death was no unfortunate accident.** Jesus came to earth on a rescue mission of love that began in eternity. Adam and Eve were supposed to be God's image bearers, casting forth the glory of God throughout the earth. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, sin and death were unleashed. Yet God, who is relentless in His love, launched a rescue mission through a man named Abraham, and through Abraham the nation of Israel was brought into being (see Gen. 12:1-3; Gal. 3:7-9). From Israel came the Messiah—the Son of Man—who fulfilled God's promise to rescue and bless the world by reversing the curse of sin (see Rom. 5:12-21).
- ▶ **Jesus died on the cross in our place.** Jesus willingly went to the cross. He had no sins of His own to pay for, but He died for our sins. He did this so that we could be eternally forgiven and our sin could be eternally forgotten. As a result, we are eternally declared to be righteous in Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:21).
- ▶ **Jesus defeated death for us.** When God raised Jesus from the dead, death lost its power over us (see Acts 2:24). Jesus rose from the dead, and so will we (see 2 Cor. 4:14). Through faith in Jesus, we are eternally united to Him (see Rom. 6:1-11).

Jesus came to earth as the fulfillment of a plan that had literally spanned thousands of years. This was a plan that has covered the breadth of human history and continues to impact the world today.

Only God could accomplish such a plan—and He did!

## **Luke 24:36-40**

**<sup>36</sup> While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." <sup>37</sup> They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. <sup>38</sup> He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? <sup>39</sup> Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." <sup>40</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.**

This was no hallucination. Yes, we can sometimes convince ourselves we see something because we really want to see it, but the disciples were not expecting to see Jesus. In fact, "they were startled and frightened," just as the women had been earlier (see v. 5). They thought they were seeing a ghost!



Jesus knew what they were thinking, and He offered to relieve their doubts: “Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” What further proof was needed? The tomb was empty, just as Jesus had said it would be. And now, He stood before them in a physical body—alive and well.

Doubt and faith are often co-mingled in our lives. Sometimes our faith is robust, yet at other times doubts threaten to derail our walk with God. Still, in every step of our journey, Jesus provides us with grace to trust Him even in the midst of doubt.

And, just like He provided His first disciples with proof of His bodily resurrection, He provides us with proof as well. That proof may be a friend whose life was changed or the overwhelming historical evidence that Jesus rose from the dead. Either way, the proof of Christ’s resurrection brings us peace.

History was forever transformed when Jesus rose from the dead early on a Sunday morning. Sin and death were defeated by the conquering King. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is now at work in those who trust him (see Rom. 8:9-11).

Because Jesus has risen from the grave, His perfect life is now ours through faith in Him.

***How has Jesus proven Himself to you in the past?***

**QUESTION #4**

***What makes the resurrection so important for believers today?***

**QUESTION #5**

## WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

*Choose one of the following statements connected with Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Record how you would respond to that statement during a conversation with a friend or family member.*

"Jesus was unconscious when they put Him in the tomb, but He never actually died."

"I don't think Jesus was an actual person in history; He's just a story."

"It was probably Jesus' disciples who made up the story of Jesus rising from the dead; they just couldn't let Him go."

"People wanted to believe Jesus was still alive, so they just imagined they saw Him."

*Where could you start looking to find additional information on the historical accuracy of Jesus' death and resurrection?*

## LIVE IT OUT

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a historical fact. Consider these options for responding to that fact in the week to come:

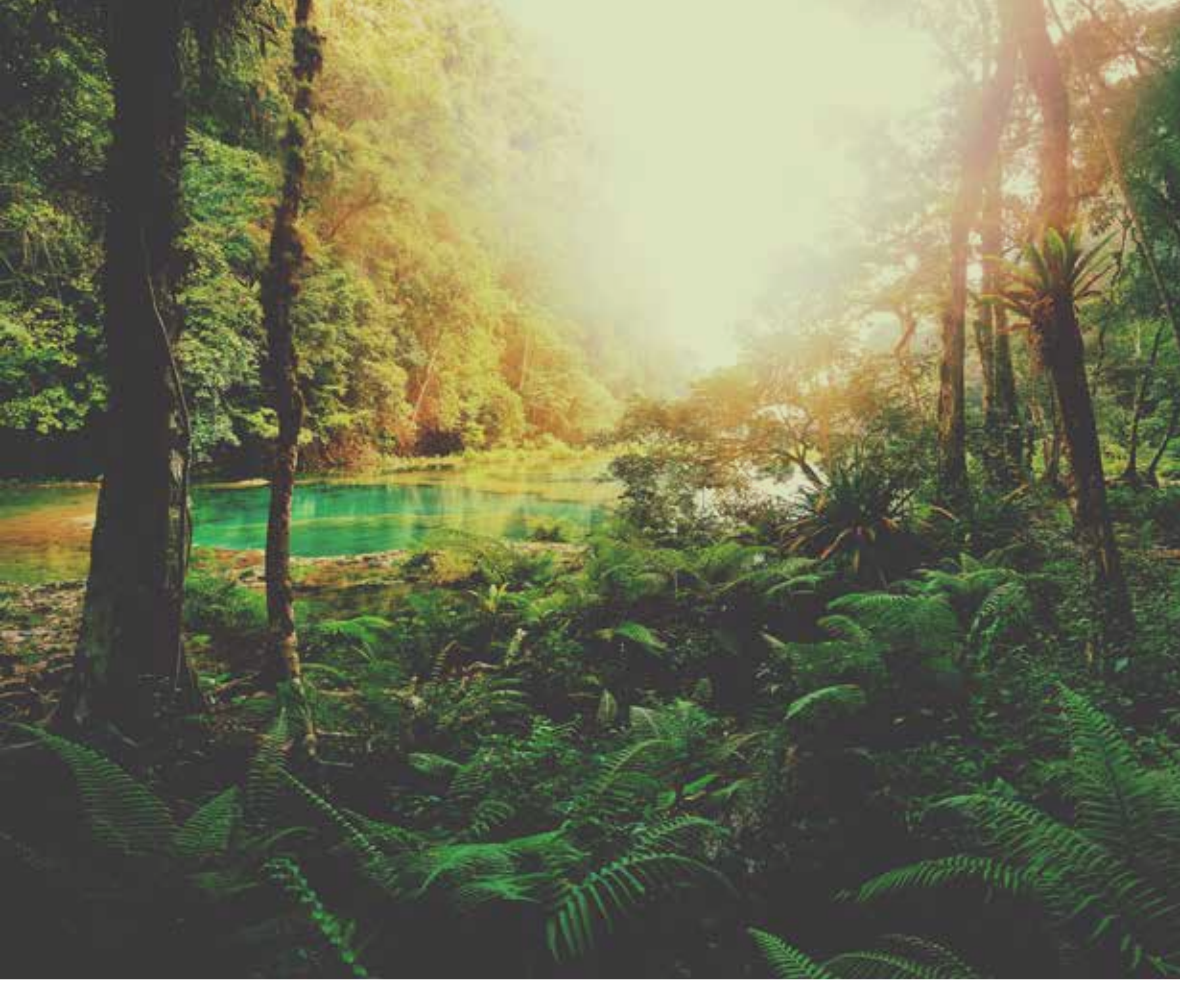
- ▶ **Believe.** If you've never embraced the truth of Christ's resurrection and what that means for your life, do so now. The inside front cover of this book will help you. Talk to your group leader about your decision to trust and follow Christ.
- ▶ **Study.** Read further about the historical evidence that proves the resurrection of Christ. Consider a book such as *Buried Hope or Risen Savior* by Charles L. Quarles or *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel.
- ▶ **Share.** Ask God each day to provide opportunities for you to share your faith with someone who has yet to believe in Christ.



The disciples were afraid. They doubted the truth of the resurrection. And yet they were ultimately transformed by Christ and used in marvelous ways to advance His kingdom in this world. The same can be true of us.

My thoughts

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLrisen**



# GATES OF SPLENDOR

BY VALERIE ELLIOT-SHEPHARD

My father once uttered this prayer, “God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life and may I burn up for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine. I seek not a long life but a full one, like You, Lord Jesus.” And then, he was speared to death. Killed by the very Ecuadorian Indians he was seeking to reach with the good news of God’s love and mercy.

I was 10 months old when he died at age 28.

The world knows of Jim Elliot primarily through books written by my mother, Elisabeth. *Through Gates of Splendor, Shadow of the Almighty,*

and *The Savage My Kinsman* reveal a redemption story only God could write. And countless people have told me how my father's words—"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose" (a paraphrase of John 12:25)—spurred them on to missionary zeal and a lifetime of greater commitment for the kingdom.

Being his only daughter but only having known him for the first 10 months of my life, I have learned of him through others, from his letters to his family and friends, and from his journal entries. I am humbled, amazed, "tenderized," and galvanized by his words. Galvanized to carry on his legacy, show his passion for obeying God, and honor his life by speaking and writing about him. I feel privileged to be the daughter of Jim and Elisabeth.

I see the disciplined strain of delayed gratification, the joy of truly waiting on God, and the fruit of willing obedience even when feelings shout otherwise. I pray that my parents' lives will encourage and inspire many who also want to study the Bible for the glory of God, who want to be His soldier—ready to serve and die, if need be, so that the living God may be shown.

Philip James Elliot was a man after God's heart. Both he and my mother were raised by godly parents and saw early the importance of reading the Bible daily and being a witness of Him. My father was a dramatist, a speaker, a kind helper, a fervent worker, and a witness to all his high school classmates. While attending Wheaton College, he threw himself into his studies in order to receive the degree of A.U.G. ("Approved Unto God," 2 Tim. 2:15). He did so not to fulfill a man-made curriculum, but to know the Bible and to know the great thinkers of history as a stepping stone to understanding humankind.

He hungered to know who this God is who died for us and commands us to love, serve, and be ready to die. He knew he had to be a soldier according to 2 Timothy 2:4, understanding that in obeying God, he'd grow to be more like Christ. He wanted to learn from older Christians and was amazed at his dad's knowledge of the Word.

Reflecting on Leviticus 17:10 when he was 20, he wrote: "He who consumes blood will ever have the face of God set against him. So with me. If I would save my lifeblood, and forbear to pour it out as a sacrifice—thus opposing the example of my Lord—then must I



know the flint of the face of God set against my purpose. Father, take my life, yea, my blood if Thou wilt, and consume it with Thine enveloping fire. I would not save it, for it is not mine to save. Have it, Lord, have it all. Pour out my life as an oblation for the world. Blood is only of value as it flows before Thine altar.”

During his college years (1945-49), he came to understand he might die young but exulted that his life was to be lived for God and not for himself. My father’s passion for bringing the gospel to tribes superseded his love for my mother—Elisabeth Howard—to whom he declared his love in her senior year at Wheaton College in 1948. Although he knew she had all the qualities of a woman he would want to marry, he felt he needed to experience the strenuous and challenging life in the jungle as a single man to be sure God wanted him to marry.

To him, Elisabeth was the picture of a woman who had the inner adornment of a gentle and quiet spirit (see 1 Pet. 3:4). She would have argued with this—as she knew she had an argumentative nature and said she was never the “shrinking violet” type. But being subdued by the awe of his love, she kept quiet, knowing privately that she loved him too. As she learned to wait on God the next five years, they sparked each other’s intellect and challenged each other’s growth in faith.

To me, my mother was the perfect lady—elegant, neat, quiet when she should be quiet, and lots of fun. She was a perfect storyteller and knew how to imitate many different accents. She loved to surprise me with thoughtful gifts and taught me to obey, listen, look her in the eyes, and respect her word. She never disappointed me by not following through. Order and quietness were marks of our home. . . .

My mother’s and father’s journals and letters are nuggets of gold from the past; the themes of their writings have become the hallmarks of their lives. I want to honor my parents’ amazing legacy and bring glory to God who provided the strength to obey, the hope in His perfect will, and the endurance to wait on His timing.

I can never repay my parents for what they taught me or for their modeling the true disciple’s life, but I can live for God as they prayed that I would. And thus . . . their life stories of redemption live on.

***“I see the disciplined strain of delayed gratification, the joy of truly waiting on God, and the fruit of willing obedience even when feelings shout otherwise.”***

**Valerie Elliot Shepard** was born in Ecuador and moved to the United States when she was 8 years old. Valerie and her husband, who is a church planter in Southport, North Carolina, have eight grown children.