

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Understanding the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and Its Soteriological Significance

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this DMIN action research project was to develop and implement a study on the resurrection of Jesus at Life Church. The problem was that people at Life Church did not adequately understand the resurrection of Christ for their belief in salvation. The study sought to help members of Life Church understand what Scripture teaches about salvation. The goal for this action research project was for members of Life Church to understand, defend, and articulate the resurrection of Jesus and its soteriological implications. There were seven total participants that took part in the study. Every participant was given the same pre- and post-study survey as well as the same interview questions before and after the study. The survey was given in order to gauge if the study resulted in growth. Moreover, the interview was given to see the participants ability to orally understand the subject and to see if the study affected their understanding of the resurrection. The results from the study yielded growth for every participant who took place in the study. The project was satisfactory in addressing the problem at Life Church.

Keywords: Apologetics, Atonement, Discipleship, Fellowship, Gospel, Justification, Resurrection, Sanctification, Soteriology

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Abbreviations

COVID-19 *Coronavirus disease 2019*

DMIN *Doctor of ministry*

ESV *English Standard Version*

IRB *Institutional Review Board*

RSV *Revised Standard Version*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Christianity is built on the doctrine of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Apart from these culminating events of Jesus' life, Christianity would be futile. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are the gospel. The resurrection, however, is key. For if Christ did not rise, then the death and burial would be futile. Therefore, the doctrine of the resurrection is the foundation on which a believer's faith and salvation are built. If one does not understand the resurrection, one will misunderstand their salvation's efficacy. If Life Church has not heard the complete gospel (1 Cor 15:1-4), their understanding of the gospel is at best partial, and at worse, their faith is incomplete. The doctrine of the resurrection is what every doctrine of Christianity is built on.¹ Thus, a misunderstanding of the resurrection of Jesus and its soteriological implications could result in beliefs that do not coincide with Scripture. Life Church does not properly understand the role the resurrection of Christ plays in their salvation.

This chapter aims to introduce the ministry context, reveal what problem exists in that context, and present a solution to the problem. Life Church is a small group of families that meet in Lubbock, Texas.² This church, therefore, needs a study on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The introduction will also provide the researcher's basic assumptions of the research process as well as definitions, delimitations, and limitations of the project.

¹ Gary Habermas, *Risen Indeed: A Historical Investigation Into the Resurrection of Jesus* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 35.

² "Life Church" is a pseudonym for the name of the small group.

The Bible is clear that apart from the resurrection, the Christian faith would be pointless (1 Cor 15:14). While there is great importance in being doctrinally sound in all areas of theology, nothing is of more importance than the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor 15:1). The resurrection is not only integral to one's salvation but also the source of life and power in the present.³ Salvation is only possible because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. However, since the resurrection of has been overlooked at Life Church, a study of the resurrection of Jesus is needed. Furthermore, New Testament Scholar Gary Habermas comments on the importance of the resurrection, noting that "in New Testament times it was also the doctrine upon which the Christian faith was built."⁴ Thus, this action research project focuses on educating and informing Life Church of all that the resurrection of Jesus Christ means for them and their salvation.

Ministry Context

The small group of believers who make up Life Church meet to have fellowship, share meals, and encourage, edify, and equip one another. The ministry is unique in that every person in the group is related by blood or marriage. The group is not affiliated with any one denomination. The member families are members of other local churches, which are non-denominational.

Ten participants are in this group. The group has an age range from two years old to eighty years old. The children will not participate in the study. Five couples are married with kids, and there is one widow. There are nine men and seven women. Four of the men are young boys. Their ages range from two to eight. One of the women is a young toddler who is two years

³ Timothy Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear: The Resurrection and the Meaning of Easter* (New York, NY: Viking, 2021), 24.

⁴ Habermas, *Risen Indeed*, 35.

old. The majority of participants are white and in the middle class. Moreover, the majority of participants have a bachelor's degree.

The participants' professions are cotton farmer, realtor, teacher, minister, director, and manager. The family has a cotton business in which five are partners and operators. Two of the participants are public school teachers. In addition, three participants are part of the researcher's writing, speaking, and media ministry. One serves on the board, one is hired part-time as the operation's director, and the other helps produce content. Moreover, one of the members is the children's director of a large interdenominational ministry in Lubbock.

Lubbock is located on the south plains of West Texas. Known as the "Hub City," Lubbock has over 257,013 people.⁵ Lubbock was given this name because it is the region's education, economics, and healthcare hub.⁶ Lubbock is the epicenter of the largest cotton-producing area in the world.⁷ The median household income is \$51,623.⁸ Lubbock is also home to Texas Tech University, which has an enrollment of over 40,000 students a year.⁹ The dominant religion in Lubbock is Christianity.¹⁰ The racial composition of Lubbock is majority

⁵ "Lubbock, TX." *TSHA*. Accessed August 22, 2022. <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/lubbock-tx>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Cotton Production Regions of Texas." *Cotton Bugs*. Accessed August 22, 2022. <https://cottonbugs.tamu.edu/cotton-production-regions-of-texas/>.

⁸ "Lubbock, TX." *Data USA*. Accessed August 22, 2022. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/lubbock-tx/>.

⁹ "Texas Tech Marks 13 Consecutive Years of Record Enrollment Growth." *Today*. Accessed August 23, 2022. <https://today.ttu.edu/posts/2021/09/Stories/texas-tech-marks-13-consecutive-years-of-record-enrollment-growth>.

¹⁰ "Many Religions Practiced in Local Community." *Lubbock Online*. Accessed on August 23, 2022. <https://www.lubbockonline.com/story/lifestyle/things-to-do/2018/03/25/many-religions-practiced-in-local-community/12916716007/>.

white (51 percent) and Hispanic (36 percent).¹¹ The majority of Lubbock citizens are politically conservative, with over 65 percent voting Republican in the last presidential election.¹²

Life Church members grew up in various theological backgrounds. While all of them were Protestant, they had the following backgrounds: Methodist, Baptist, Church of Christ, Episcopalian, and Charismatic. The members have been believers in Jesus Christ since their childhood. Moreover, the members affirm the core doctrines of Christianity.¹³

As noted above, the members of Life Church are also a part of other ministries, small groups, and congregations in the Lubbock area. Community with other believers is a central ritual for the members of Life Church. Each week, members of Life Church are actively involved in ministries across the city. Moreover, members of Life Church collectively have a passion for reaching the lost and encouraging fellow believers with the truthfulness of the gospel.

Since the members participate in various congregations and ministries, no single preacher speaks in their lives. While this is a tremendous benefit, there can also be contradictory messages and beliefs that members share. Moreover, one congregation may emphasize one doctrine over the other, which results in a lack of understanding in some areas of theology.

As noted above, the researcher has a non-profit ministry that members of the group are a part of. Moreover, the entire Life Church group supports and encourages this ministry in one way or another. The researcher and group connected over a shared love for Christ and the gospel. Moreover, this love for Jesus is the foundation of what makes this group healthy and connected.

¹¹ “Lubbock, TX.” *Census Reporter*. Accessed on August 23, 2022. <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US4845000-lubbock-tx/>.

¹² “November 3, 2020.” *Results*. Accessed on August 23, 2022. <https://results.enr.clarityelections.com/TX/Lubbock/105035/web.264614/#/summary>.

¹³ See The Evangelical Free Church of America’s Doctrinal statement (<https://www.efca.org/sof>).

In light of this, facilitating a deep study and analysis of this group is welcomed. The mutual love shared between the researcher and group makes this context an excellent setting for this action project research because they are more willing to take the necessary steps. Moreover, since this is a family ministry, each member desires to make this group as healthy and Christ-centered as possible.

Problem Presented

The resurrection of Jesus is what makes or breaks Christianity. Members of Life Church have studied marriage, pleasing God, and general topics found in Scripture, but they have not had a focused study on the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus is what makes one's faith worthwhile. Unfortunately, many members of Life Church do not understand what the resurrection of Jesus means to them personally. If one does not understand the resurrection of Jesus, then one will not be able to understand their belief about salvation nor defend the Christian faith. The members have not had a detailed study of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Recent studies of the church in North America have shown that many Christians believe they can work for God's acceptance and qualify for heaven by doing good.¹⁴ These studies reveal that Life Church faces a similar challenge to the church at large. Moreover, this reveals that many Christians do not understand how the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of their salvation.

Incorrect teaching on salvation did not happen overnight. In the age of information, some members of Life Church seem to have been negatively influenced by unbiblical teaching.

Analyzing the data from the questionnaire administered at the beginning of the study provides

¹⁴ George Barna, *Full Release #8: Views of Sin and Salvation* (Glendale, AZ: Cultural Research Center, Arizona Christian University, August 4, 2020), 1, <https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/AWVI-2020-Release-08-Perceptions-of-Sin-and-Salvation.pdf>.

more insight into this claim and whether it is correct. Moreover, they may have lost focus on the resurrection of Jesus. This is indicative of the lack of teaching on that particular topic in the last two years. An analysis of the last two years' messages of the various churches reveals there was not one series that focused on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, the need for a study on the resurrection of Jesus.

Furthermore, Life Church does not correctly understand what they believe about being saved. Moreover, they cannot adequately defend or comprehend what they believe. The problem is that people at Life Church do not adequately understand the resurrection of Christ for their belief in salvation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to develop and implement a study on the resurrection at Life Church. The study will have five lessons that discuss what Scripture, history, and contemporary scholarship teach about the resurrection and salvation. The participants of this study will be church members who will commit to going through the study and being a part of this action research project.

The benefit of this study will be twofold. First, participants of this study will be engaged in a robust study of God's Word that will build them up and renew their minds (Acts 20:32; Rom 12:2). Second, they will be able to understand and articulate what they believe about salvation so that they are not "carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:14, English Standard Version).

Basic Assumptions

This action research project includes a few assumptions. The first assumption is that the new study will train and educate the members in ways they have not been taught in the past. This assumption implies that the members will also be able to articulate what they have been taught from the study. Moreover, another assumption is embedded in this: that all the members of Life Church will want to participate in this study.

The second assumption is that if members understand the resurrection and its implications for salvation and the Christian life, they will be anchored to truth and not be deceived by false teachings. Furthermore, this understanding would help them overcome the lies the culture is feeding them about Jesus and salvation.

The third assumption is that all the members participating in this action research project are believers. To be saved and thus a believer means to confess that Jesus is Lord and to believe in one's heart that God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 10:9). Thus, this action research project is not meant to convince unbelievers to come to Christ. Instead, this study is meant to equip members to know the truths of the resurrection.

The final assumption is that the problem of this action research project finds its origin in incorrect teaching. The writer of Hebrews teaches that Christians must pay closer attention to what they have heard, or they risk drifting away from it (Heb 2:1). Therefore, a solution is proper teaching and paying closer attention to the gospel of first importance (1 Cor 15:1-3).

Definitions

This action research project concerns itself with the understanding of the resurrection of Jesus at Life Church. It is important to define important terms and phrases that will be used

throughout this project. These terms include atonement, Christian apologetics, doctrine, eternal security, and other terms and phrases that overlap and connect.

Atonement. The atonement is a loaded concept that has many theories. This project uses the word atonement to explain how the saving life, death, and resurrection of Jesus restores all things to God. As Professor and Theologian Adam Johnson writes, "The doctrine of the atonement is a conceptually unified account of how the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are effective for the reconciliation of all things to God (Col 1:20)."¹⁵

This project does not go into the various models or modes of the atonement. However, the reader needs to understand that there is more than one way to describe how Christ accomplished redemption for His people. These theories or methods include penal substitution, ransom theory, Christus victor, and satisfaction theory. While the researcher recognizes the various Scriptures that speak of how Christ secured forgiveness for sinners and rescued them, for the purpose of this project, John Stott's definition captures the central theme of the atonement. He says, "In and through Christ crucified God substituted himself for us and bore our sins, dying in our place the death we deserved to die, in order that we might be restored to his favor and adopted into his family."¹⁶

Christian Apologetics. The defense of a particular belief or position. According to Christian apologist and professor Douglas Groothuis, Christian apologetics "is the rational defense of the Christian worldview as objectively true, rationally compelling and existentially or

¹⁵ Adam J. Johnson, *Atonement: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 37.

¹⁶ John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 13.

subjectively engaging.”¹⁷ For this project, Christian apologetics is the method used to teach and passed on to the members.

Doctrine. The teaching of Scripture regarding a particular topic. Professor of Theology Wayne Grudem defines doctrine as "what the whole Bible teaches us today about some particular topic.”¹⁸ New Testament scholar Michael Bird adds that “Doctrine is that which springs from the word of the gospel and provides the basis for the core teachings of the faith shared by all major Christian groups.”¹⁹

Eternal Security. The assurance that one will be saved forever and that salvation cannot be lost or forfeited. Eternal life is a gift from God that is found in Jesus and is given when one believes in Jesus and repents (Rom 6:23; 1 John 5:11; John 3:16; Acts 2:38). Professor and scholar Norman Geisler says that “All believers can be sure they are saved and will continue in their faith to the end.”²⁰ Scripture is bursting with passages that teach the eternal security of a believer.²¹

The assurance and foundation of a believer’s eternal life are found in the resurrection of Christ.²² Gary Habermas says, “Almost incomprehensibly, Jesus’s resurrection guarantees that the believer’s heavenly inheritance ‘is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven’ for

¹⁷ Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Truth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 24.

¹⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology, Second Edition: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 6.

¹⁹ Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology, Second Edition: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 45.

²⁰ Norman Geisler, “A Moderate Calvinist View,” in *Four Views on Eternal Security* ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 68.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 70-77. For examples, see: Job 19:25-26; Ecclesiastes 3:14; John 3:18; 5:24; 6:37, 39-40; 10:27-29; 17:9-24; Romans 4:5-6; 8:29-30, 33, 35, 37-39; 11:29; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 5:17, 21; Ephesians 1:4-5, 13-14; 2:5-6; Philippians 1:6; 4:3; 2 Timothy 1:12; 4:18; Hebrews 10:14; 12:2; 1 Peter 1:5; 2 John 3:9; Jude 24-25.

²² Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 1st ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 158.

us (1 Pt 1:3-4, RSV).”²³ Believers are saved since Jesus was resurrected and lives forever.²⁴

Michael Bird confirms this in his commentary on Romans 5:10, saying a believer’s salvation “remains dependent on the continuing life of Christ.”²⁵

Faith. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen (Heb 11:1). New Testament scholar Tom Schreiner, commenting on this passage, says, "Faith is assured that what is hoped for will become a reality. It is convinced that the unseen promises of God will be fulfilled."²⁶ Faith is not blind belief in God, nor does faith reject reason, science, or history.²⁷ Faith is trust in Jesus based on reason, evidence, and the message of the gospel.²⁸

Gospel. This is a broad topic. Nonetheless, the gospel means good news. New Testament scholar Scot McKnight writes, "The gospel is centered around the story of Christ and is the declaration of what He has done to save people from their sins."²⁹ Ray Ortlund summarizes the message of the gospel by saying, “God, through the perfect life, atoning death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, rescues all his people from the wrath of God into peace with God, with a promise of the full restoration of his created order forever—all to the praise of the glory of his grace.”³⁰ For this project, the gospel means all that Christ accomplished through the cross and resurrection.

²³ Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 159.

²⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Hebrews: Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 234.

²⁵ Michael Bird, *Romans, The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 166.

²⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 339.

²⁷ Timothy Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 15

²⁸ Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, *A Concise Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020), 132.

²⁹ Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 61.

³⁰ Ray Ortlund, *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 16.

Justification. This broad theological term has many facets and is hotly debated. Justification means to be declared righteous with God. Wayne Grudem defines justification as “an instantaneous legal act of God in which he thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us, and declares us to be righteous in his sight.”³¹ Justification is a new standing before God.³² Tom Schreiner says, “Justification refers to God’s verdict of not guilty on the day of judgment (Rom 2:13). God’s eschatological verdict has now been announced in advance for those who believe in Jesus Christ.”

Minimal Facts. The minimal facts argument was birthed from Gary Habermas’ dissertation.³³ This was his central methodological approach. In defining this, he writes, “No historical or other fact will be employed unless it can be established by multiple lines of evidence, each being derived by critical means. Because of this initial underpinning, virtually all recent critical scholars, including atheists, agnostics, and other skeptical specialists in relevant fields, accept these facts.”³⁴

Regarding this project, the minimal facts will be key to defending the resurrection's historicity. Habermas explains what these are. He writes:

In recent years, the six minimal facts that are generally used are (1) Jesus' death by crucifixion, followed by (2) the disciples had experiences that, they concluded, were appearances of the risen Jesus. (3) These Gospel data began to be taught exceptionally early, sometime between the initial year of the crucifixion itself and the next year or two. (4) The disciples were transformed by these events, even to the point of being willing to die for the resurrection message. Lastly, two former unbelievers, (5) James, the brother of Jesus, and (6) the church persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, both became believers because they concluded that they, too, had witnessed appearances of the risen Jesus.³⁵

³¹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 885.

³² Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 436.

³³ Habermas, *Risen Indeed*, 21.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

The Resurrection of Jesus. The event of the resurrection of Jesus is what Christianity stands on.³⁶ In this project, when speaking of the resurrection of Jesus, the researcher is speaking of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. While the study will discuss and defend the historicity of the resurrection, one must know that the researcher affirms and believes in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. William Lane Craig, Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, writes, “The belief that Jesus rose from the dead lay at the very heart of the earliest Christian faith.”³⁷

Salvation. There are various ways to describe what it means to be saved. Moreover, there are various images and ways by which salvation is defined in Scripture. Theologian Millard Erickson writes, “Salvation is the application of the work of Christ to the lives of humans.”³⁸ Matthew Barrett adds, “In its broadest sense, salvation refers to being rescued from danger. More specifically, in Scripture salvation refers to being ‘rescued’ from the wrath of God, sin, and the devil.”³⁹ Michael Bird notes that forgiveness, redemption, rescue, reconciliation, justification, peace, adoption, eternal life, and theosis are all images that help to explain salvation.⁴⁰

It is also important to note that salvation is a past event, a present reality, and a future hope. Barrett says, “Scripture describes salvation in three different ways: past, present, and future. Salvation is not only what God has accomplished already through his Son, nor is

³⁶ William L. Craig, *The Son Rises: Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 27.

³⁷ Craig, *The Son Rises*, 127.

³⁸ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 422.

³⁹ Matthew Barrett, *40 Questions About Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2018), 48.

⁴⁰ Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 548 – 579.

salvation something the Spirit has presently brought about in conversion, but salvation is also described as a future reality and one that provides the believer with tremendous hope.”⁴¹

When speaking of salvation, union with Christ captures the core element of what it means to be saved. Professor and Theologian Marcus Johnson says, “To be saved is to be united to the Savior.”⁴² Regarding union with Christ, Grudem writes, “the entire study of the application of redemption could be included in this subject.”⁴³ Professor and Theologian Lane Tipton adds, “There are no benefits of the gospel apart from union with Christ.”⁴⁴

Sanctification. There are two aspects of sanctification. The first is that believers are sanctified and set apart by God.⁴⁵ The New Testament says believers are sanctified (1 Cor 6:11; Acts 20:32) and made holy once and for all (Heb 10:10). The second aspect of sanctification is that believers progress in holy living.⁴⁶ The New Testament speaks of believers working out their salvation (Phil 2:12-13), putting on love (Col 3:14), and being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). Therefore, it is critical to understand that “Pursuing holiness and righteousness is not the basis of our salvation; rather, it is the appropriate response to salvation and the outworking of salvation in our character and conduct.”⁴⁷

⁴¹ Barrett, *40 Questions*, 53.

⁴² Marcus P. Johnson, *One With Christ: An Evangelical Theology of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 29.

⁴³ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1031.

⁴⁴ Lane G. Tipton, “Union with Christ and Justification,” in *Justified in Christ: God’s Plan for Us in Justification*, ed. K. Scott Oliphint (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2007), 34.

⁴⁵ Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 542.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 543.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 542.

Limitations

A few limitations to this action research project need to be discussed. Firstly, the researcher is close friends with the members. Although risks may be associated with this, the researcher will seek to emphasize the researcher and the subject's role in this project.

The next limitation is the size and structure of Life Church. While it may be beneficial to have a larger pool of people from different families, the benefit of this group is that the level of participation should be higher. Moreover, embedded in this limitation is that since everyone is part of the same family in one way or another, groupthink bias may exist. However, this could exist in any close-knit group, whether family or not.

The last limitation is unforeseen circumstances. In light of the recent and current coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the researcher understands the possibility that this study will have to be flexible due to unforeseen circumstances similar to COVID-19. Moreover, unforeseen circumstances happen in life. Thus, the study may not have a consistent group of members each week.

Delimitations

Several delimitations also need to be addressed. The first delimitation is that the study will take place over six weeks in the winter or spring of 2022 – 2023. The researcher will work directly with the members to find the appropriate time to conduct the study in light of their schedules. The study will take place at the home the members regularly visit each Sunday evening.

The next delimitation is the topic itself. Several sub-topics could be explored concerning the resurrection. This action research project is setting boundaries around the historical facts

about the resurrection of Jesus and its implications for salvation. While objections and other beliefs will be explored, the focus will be on the essential beliefs about the resurrection.

Another delimitation is the participating members of the group. Only members of Life Church will participate in the study. No outside visitors or guests will participate because the action research project focuses on Life Church members. Given the small window needed to complete this project, the study must only be planned and organized with the existing members.

The final delimitation will be the age of the members. Many children involved in Life Church will not participate in this study due to their age. One reason for this is that some of the children are new or young to the faith. Another reason is that some of the children are only toddlers. Thus, the researcher will not include anyone in this study under the age of eighteen.

Thesis Statement

Life Church does not have a Bible study on the resurrection and its application for salvation. The members of the church must understand the importance of the resurrection of Jesus. Moreover, members must understand how the resurrection is related to their salvation. The thesis of this project is that if members of Life Church go through a focused Bible study on the resurrection, then they will understand what Scripture teaches about salvation.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter shows how scholars have viewed the resurrection and what they agree and disagree with. Moreover, this chapter interacts with a wide range of literature to show how each work supports the thesis, how the thesis is distinct from other works, and what gaps exist. The following literature review played a key role in the research process. While studying the scholarly works on the resurrection, six central themes arose and are discussed throughout the chapter. These themes are the historical evidence for the resurrection, objections to the resurrection of Jesus, the resurrection and salvation, the resurrection and the cross, the resurrection and behavior, and the person of Jesus and the resurrection. The theoretical foundation's section explores how the theological foundations inform the ministry practices of this research.

Literature Review

The resurrection of Jesus is the most essential doctrine of Christianity. It is the doctrine upon which every doctrine of Christianity sits.¹ The Christian faith would crumble and have no meaning if Christ did not rise.² Moreover, the resurrection of Jesus is the heart of the gospel.³ Thus, if the resurrection of Jesus is not true, then salvation is impossible. Furthermore, the

¹ Gary Habermas, *Risen Indeed*, 35.

² Craig, *The Son Rises*, 7.

³ N. T. Wright and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 317.

resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of salvation to all those who believe.⁴ The following literature review covers what Scripture, history, and current scholarship teach about salvation and the resurrection of Jesus.

The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection

A major theme in all literature concerning the resurrection of Jesus is the historical evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus. This theme is dominant because one cannot build any Christian doctrine without establishing the resurrection's historicity. Over the last ten years, the evidence for the resurrection has continued to withstand refutations. Gary Habermas notes that around two-thirds of researchers affirm the empty tomb of Jesus.⁵ Moreover, Habermas' research found that approximately 75 percent of scholars hold that Jesus appeared bodily and not in a glorious, non-bodily form.⁶ Thus, New Testament Scholar Gavin Ortlund communicates, "It's plausible, on historical grounds, to believe in the resurrection of Christ."⁷

Establishing the evidence for the resurrection is vital because the entire Christian faith is based on the historical reality of the resurrection.⁸ William Lane Craig shares, "The Christian faith stands or falls on the event of the resurrection. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then Christianity is a myth, and we may as well forget it."⁹ Salvation is dependent upon three historical events, the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ. Unfortunately, at Life Church, they

⁴ Albert Mohler, *The Apostles' Creed: Discovering Authentic Christianity in an Age of Counterfeits* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019), 94.

⁵ Habermas, *Risen Indeed*, 18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷ Gavin Ortlund, *Why God Makes Sense in A World That Doesn't* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 201.

⁸ Ross W. Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Exploring Its Theological Significance and Ongoing Relevance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 2.

⁹ Craig, *The Son Rises*, 7.

understand the first two but not the resurrection of Jesus. The birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus are all historical events that undergird the gospel. The account of these three events is the gospel (1 Cor 15:1-8). As Tim Keller writes, "The gospel begins with the reporting of certain historical events. Christianity is rightly seen as a life-changing experience, but it will transform you only if you accept as facts that certain events occurred in history."¹⁰

The most widely used methodology for establishing the resurrection's historicity is the minimal facts approach that Gary Habermas created.¹¹ Nearly all scholars agree on these four to ten facts and are found in nearly every argument for the resurrection's historicity.¹² Of these ten facts Habermas listed, four stand out among modern literature.¹³ This is why many scholars believe the resurrection of Jesus is the best explanation for the evidence and the rise of Christianity.

A strict methodology establishes these facts. Habermas says, "No historical or other fact will be employed unless it can be established by multiple lines of evidence, each being derived by critical means."¹⁴ Habermas says the result of this is that "virtually all recent critical scholars, including atheists, agnostics, and other skeptical specialists in relevant fields, accept the facts."¹⁵

The first fact is that Jesus died by crucifixion. On this, Licona and Beck share that at least four non-biblical sources record the crucifixion of Jesus.¹⁶ Further, for those who are not

¹⁰ Timothy Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 2.

¹¹ McGrew notes that Habermas' minimal facts are the most widespread methodology in apologetic circles. Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View: Undesigned Coincidences in the Gospels and Acts* (Chillicothe, OH: DeWard, 2017), 220-221.

¹² Habermas, *Risen Indeed*, 22.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁶ David W. Beck, and Michael R. Licona, *Raised on the Third Day: Defending the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 84.

convinced of the reliability of the New Testament, ample historical evidence exists apart from Scripture that speaks of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.¹⁷ New Testament scholar and atheist Bart Ehrman agrees that the crucifixion of Jesus is a fact that every scholar agrees on and says there are at least fifteen sources for Jesus' crucifixion.¹⁸

The burial of Jesus and the discovery of His empty tomb are considered historically solid.¹⁹ This historical fact bolsters the claim that Jesus was crucified because if He was buried in a tomb, logically, He must have died. Furthermore, it was an extremely important practice for Jews to bury people and not leave them to decay.²⁰ Moreover, if Jesus died, then this discredits any theory that seeks to explain away the resurrection of Christ by saying Jesus never died. On this, Habermas notes there is ample extra-biblical evidence for the empty tomb.²¹ Furthermore, as Craig notes, if there was no empty tomb, then why would the gospel writers invent a story where women, who were deemed incredible, were the ones who discovered the empty tomb?²² Keller adds that the earliest gospel summary includes that Jesus died and was buried, thus making the point that this event was not merely spiritual but that Jesus actually died, was buried, and the tomb was found empty.²³ Lastly, "it is hard to imagine belief in a risen Jesus getting very far if one could easily point to the grave in which he was still present."²⁴

¹⁷ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 752.

¹⁸ Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2013), 12, 74.

¹⁹ N. T. Wright and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in Its World*, 317.

²⁰ Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and the Remains of His Day: Studies in the Evidence of Material Culture* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2015), 109–45.

²¹ Habermas, *Risen Jesus*, 230.

²² Carl Stecher, and Craig L. Blomberg, *Resurrection: Faith or Fact? A Scholars' Debate Between a Skeptic and a Christian* (Chicago, IL: Pitchstone Publishing, 2019), 137.

²³ Timothy Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 9.

²⁴ Peter J. Williams, *Can We Trust the Gospels?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 134.

Bart Ehrman argues that Jesus was never buried after the crucifixion and that "the tradition that there was a specific, known person who buried Jesus appears to have been a later one."²⁵ Furthermore, John Dominic Crossan popularized the theory that Jesus was probably buried in a shallow grave with the others killed by crucifixion and then eaten by animals.²⁶ However, the creed of 1 Corinthians 15 is dated early, which speaks of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.²⁷ Moreover, the tomb Jesus was said to be buried in was a well-known tomb owned by Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin.²⁸ The Jewish leaders at the time admitted to the fact that the tomb was found empty (Matt 28:11-15). The burial of Jesus and the empty tomb have six sources that verify this, which is why historian Paul Maier says, "Many facts from antiquity rest on just one ancient source, while two or three sources in agreement generally render the fact unimpeachable."²⁹ Lastly, skeptical historian Michael Grant, a professor at Edinburgh University, says, "True, the discovery of the empty tomb is differently described by the various gospels, but if we apply the same sort of criteria that we would apply to any other ancient literary sources, then the evidence is firm and plausible enough to necessitate the conclusion that the tomb was, indeed, found empty."³⁰

The appearance of Jesus to His disciples is a historical fact that most scholars affirm. Dale Allison, a New Testament scholar and skeptic says that the disciple's experiences of the

²⁵ Bart Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 87.

²⁶ John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 1991), 392-393.

²⁷ Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove; Nottingham, U.K.: IVP; Apollos, 2010), 227-228.

²⁸ Frank Turek and Norman Geisler, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 302.

²⁹ Paul L. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time: A Historian Looks at Christmas, Easter, and the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1997), 197.

³⁰ Michael Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 176.

risen Christ were genuine.³¹ The appearances of Jesus to His disciples and hundreds of others, coupled with the empty tomb, point to an extraordinary event.³² The Apostle Paul knew the resurrection of Jesus was difficult for Christians to believe, so he based his argument on eyewitness testimony.³³ Moreover, Keller notes that the Jews of Jesus' day "either did not believe in resurrection at all or believed only in a general resurrection of the righteous at the end of time when the whole world was renewed."³⁴ Thus, this is why the Apostle Paul spends extensive time speaking of eyewitness testimony because it required extraordinary evidence for first-century Jews to believe in something they had never been taught.³⁵

The transformation of the disciples and the conversion of James and Saul provide some of the most significant evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.³⁶ Paul teaches that there were over five hundred eyewitnesses to the risen Jesus (1 Cor 15:3-8). Further, the Gospels and 1 John teach of Jesus's followers eating with Him, touching Him, and hearing Him. James, the brother of Jesus, was converted because he believed in the risen Jesus. New Testament Scholar Reginald Fuller says that James' transformation is so convincing "it might be said that if there were no record of an appearance to James, the Lord's brother in the New Testament, we should have to invent one in order to account for his post-resurrection conversion and rapid advance."³⁷ Moreover, Saul, the persecutor of Christians, was also converted due to his experience with the

³¹ Dale C. Allison, *The Resurrection of Jesus: Apologetics, Polemics, History* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2021), 402-403.

³² Timothy Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 10.

³³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 308.

³⁴ Timothy Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 8.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁶ Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 2.

³⁷ Reginald H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 37.

risen Jesus. The transformation of Jesus' disciples resulted in them preaching the resurrection and being willing to die for their faith.³⁸

As noted above, scholars agree that there are at least four agreed-upon facts among Christian and non-Christian scholars.³⁹ These facts have gone through a specific criterion. One is whether there is ample scholarly evidence from multiple lines of argumentation.⁴⁰ The other is whether contemporary scholars acknowledge it.⁴¹ Where scholars differ with Habermas is on the longer list of his facts. At least four facts are affirmed by over 90 percent of scholars, and the rest have a majority affirmation.⁴²

These historical facts are why Michael Bird proclaims that the resurrection of Jesus "rests on a bedrock of historical evidence that renders it more probable than any alternative thesis."⁴³ The early Christian message was based on one event: the resurrection of Jesus. The entire gospel is based on and centered on the resurrection. Thus, without the resurrection of Jesus, there would have been no message and no Christianity. Douglas Moo shares, "To deny Christ's resurrection would be to evacuate Christian faith of any meaning."⁴⁴ Furthermore, N.T. Wright indicates, "it is impossible... to account for the early Christian belief in Jesus as Messiah without the resurrection."⁴⁵ N.T. Wright notes that one has the challenge to come up with a historical

³⁸ Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 257.

³⁹ Beck and Licona, *Raised On the Third Day*, 12.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Gary Habermas, *Risen Indeed*, 25.

⁴³ Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 437.

⁴⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *A Theology of Paul and His Letters: The Gift of the New Realm in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 154.

⁴⁵ N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Scripture: Engaging Contemporary Issues* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2014), 46, 50.

explanation that is possible considering these facts as well as explaining the birth of the church.⁴⁶

In sum, Keller writes:

So we are left with two hard-to-refute facts: that the tomb was empty and that hundreds of people claimed to have seen the risen Christ. We could plausibly claim the body was stolen if we had only the empty tomb. If we only had testimonies, we could say they had to be fantasies. Together, however, they give evidence that something extraordinary happened.⁴⁷

Objections to the Resurrection of Jesus

A major theme throughout the majority of literature concerning the resurrection of Jesus is responding to the objections to the historical evidence. Keller notes that no historical event can be tested in a laboratory and proven empirically.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, as Keller says, one can still say that events happened in history based on historical evidence.⁴⁹ Moreover, N.T. Wright adds, “No other explanations have been offered, in two thousand years of sneering skepticism. . . that can satisfactorily account for how the tomb came to be empty, how the disciples came to see Jesus, and how their lives and worldviews were transformed.”⁵⁰

The first objection often raised about the resurrection of Jesus is the idea that the disciples and eyewitnesses were hallucinating or having a vision of the risen Christ.⁵¹ However, as Gary Habermas has noted, the likelihood of five hundred people hallucinating is not plausible, and “most psychologists dispute that possibility.”⁵² Moreover, Jesus did not just appear to one

⁴⁶ N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol 3 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 707.

⁴⁷ Timothy Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 11.

⁴⁸ Keller, *Hope In Times of Fear*, 14.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁰ N.T Wright, *Surprised by Scripture*, 59.

⁵¹ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 335.

⁵² Gary Habermas, “Explaining Away Jesus’s Resurrection: The Recent Revival of Hallucination Theories,” *Christian Research Journal* 23, no. 4 (2001): 26–31, 47–49,

person or one group. Instead, He appeared to hundreds of people, in over a dozen separate settings, over a forty-day period.⁵³ Furthermore, as Turek and Geisler point out, Jesus either ate or was physically touched in six appearances.⁵⁴

The second objection discussed throughout the literature is the swoon theory.⁵⁵ As noted above, that Jesus died is a fact that most scholars agree on. Moreover, three medical doctors confirmed this in the *Journal of American Medical Association*.⁵⁶ They indicate that "Interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge."⁵⁷ As Hastings notes, the Gospels describe Jesus's wound in His side, the blood and water that was emitted, and the witness of the centurion.⁵⁸ Lastly, as Turek and Geisler say, even if Jesus could have survived, moved the tomb, and escaped the guards, He would not have been able to convince His followers that He conquered death.⁵⁹

Lastly, an objection raised is that Jesus rising from the grave is merely a myth. Habermas lists four core reasons why most scholars reject this objection. The first is that the resurrection was the core belief of the early church as attested by the creed quoted in 1 Corinthians 15.⁶⁰ The second reason is that the eyewitnesses preached that Jesus died and rose again.⁶¹ Thirdly, unlike

www.researchgate.net/publication/228846841_Explaining_Away_Jesus'_Resurrection_the_Recent_Revival_of_Halucinat_Theories.

⁵³ Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith*, 302.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 302.

⁵⁵ Lee Strobel notes, "While reputable scholars have repudiated this so-called swoon theory, it keeps recurring in popular literature." Lee Strobel, *The Case for Easter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 11.

⁵⁶ William D. Edwards, Wesley J. Gabel, and Floyd E. Hosmer, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 255, no. 11 (March 21, 1986): 1463.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 8.

⁵⁹ Turek and Geisler, *I Don't Have Enough Faith*, 305.

⁶⁰ Habermas, *Risen Indeed*, 150.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

ancient myths that some claim Christianity copied, Jesus was a historical person, and the god of those myths was not.⁶² Lastly, there is large doubt that the concept of resurrection even appears in ancient myths prior to Christ.⁶³ As Craig Blomberg says, “The earliest Jewish and pagan critics of the resurrection understood the Gospel writers to be making historical claims, not writing myth or legend. They merely disputed the plausibility of those claims.”⁶⁴ Moreover, Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland write that “when mutually accepted standards of historiography (the science of historical investigation) are applied to ancient religious records, the Jesus of history fares well historically.”⁶⁵

The Resurrection and Salvation

The resurrection of Jesus is not merely a historical event. It is the promise of salvation to all who believe.⁶⁶ A Christian's salvation is not connected to a future event or something they might accomplish before death. Instead, a Christian's salvation is wholly dependent on the resurrection of Jesus. This is not to say that the life and death of Jesus do not matter. Instead, as Hastings says, the resurrection is "the climax and seal of the saving work of Jesus. In fact, the atonement is not complete without the resurrection."⁶⁷ Wright and Bird point out that "Jesus' resurrection is the cornerstone of the Christian hope."⁶⁸

⁶² Habermas, *Risen Indeed*, 150.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁶⁴ Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 259.

⁶⁵ Wilkins, Michael J., and J. P. Moreland, *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 3.

⁶⁶ Mohler, *The Apostles' Creed*, 94.

⁶⁷ Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 17.

⁶⁸ Wright and Bird, *The New Testament*, 306.

The resurrection of Jesus is what makes the cross effective. Without the resurrection, the cross would not be enough.⁶⁹ While the shed blood of Jesus through the cross brings about the forgiveness of a believer, without the resurrection, there would be no forgiveness. Both the cross and resurrection are essential for one to be saved.⁷⁰ The resurrection is what establishes every doctrine of the New Testament.⁷¹ Moreover, the Christian faith was constructed and started based on the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus.⁷² Thus, as Keller notes, the cross alone does not save a believer; instead, the resurrection of Jesus is the source of salvation.⁷³

The resurrection is the guarantee of a Christian's salvation.⁷⁴ The very foundation of one's salvation is the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁷⁵ Furthermore, since Jesus lives forever and will never die, He is able to save the believer completely and fully.⁷⁶ Hastings says, "We can only be brought into union only with someone who is alive. All that he accomplished in his death forensically becomes effectual for us in his risen person, and the satisfaction of God with his atoning work, expressed in the resurrection, is vicariously ascribed to us."⁷⁷

The source of salvation, forgiveness, and Christian assurance is found only in the resurrection of Jesus.⁷⁸ As Mohler says, "Christ's resurrection establishes the theological foundation upon which the Christian finds forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death, and life

⁶⁹ Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 17.

⁷⁰ Michael J. Gorman, *Romans: A Theological and Pastoral Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2022), 222.

⁷¹ Habermas, *Risen Indeed*, 42.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Timothy Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 23-24.

⁷⁴ Gorman, *Romans*, 240.

⁷⁵ Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 82.

⁷⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Hebrews: Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 232.

⁷⁷ Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 31.

⁷⁸ Mohler, *The Apostles' Creed*, 101.

everlasting. We can now see why the empty tomb is the source of such hope and the assurance of our salvation. The resurrection of Christ from the dead fulfilled all the promises of God.”⁷⁹

The historical event of the resurrection of Jesus is what secures the future inheritance of believers.⁸⁰ The logic, then, is that if Christ has not risen, then the promises of the gospel are not true.⁸¹ Furthermore, since one’s salvation is rooted in a historical event, the resurrection of Jesus, then in order for one to be unsaved, Christ’s resurrection would have to be reversed.⁸²

The gap in the literature is that while many affirm the resurrection as the means of salvation, they also affirm other things, such as allegiance or some form of works to keep one’s salvation. For example, while Wright speaks of the resurrection as the cornerstone of Christian hope, he also says that justification will be given “on the basis of the whole life led.”⁸³ Matthew Bates speaks of believing in certain facts, such as the resurrection of Jesus, in order to fulfill the requirements of salvation.⁸⁴ However, he then states, “Allegiance alone is required for salvation,” and, “We will be judged, at least in part, for eternal life on the basis of our works.”⁸⁵

This double talk seems confusing to the general population, as evidenced by the previously mentioned research. While at first glance, this double talk may seem present in the New Testament, one must understand the relationship of faith and works in relation to salvation by grace through faith. The efficacy of the resurrection of Jesus does not mean works do not matter. On the contrary, faith in the completed work of Christ places the believer in Him, which

⁷⁹ Mohler, *The Apostles’ Creed*, 102.

⁸⁰ Craig S. Keener, *1 Peter: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 30.

⁸¹ Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 309.

⁸² Dane Ortlund says, “For God to de-resurrect you, to bring his rich mercy to an end, Jesus Christ himself would have to be sucked down out of heaven and put back in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. You’re that safe.” Dane C. Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 178.

⁸³ N.T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2008), 57.

⁸⁴ Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 93.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 13, 108.

makes the believer created for good works (Eph 2:10). As Bock writes, “There is a positive role for works, not as a cause of salvation, but as a product of it.”⁸⁶ Titus 2:14 speaks of God redeeming believers that are zealous of good works. The effect of Christ’s work on the believer’s life is that they do what is good.⁸⁷ New Testament scholar, Robert Yarbrough, commenting on this text, writes that Paul sees good works as “the inevitable outworking of Jesus’s signature saving action in the light of his resurrection, which in conquering death gives life to mortal beings.”⁸⁸

Thus, there has not been a true connection between the historical event of the resurrection and one's salvation. If one truly believes the birth, death, and resurrection are enough, one will rest their entire confidence on that and nothing else. This is where this research will be distinct. The application of the resurrection of Christ is essential to understanding one's salvation.

However, the application of the resurrection must be received by grace through faith. According to a recent survey, “a majority of people who describe themselves as Christian (52%) accept a works-oriented means to God’s acceptance.”⁸⁹ Moreover, many believers believe they can earn a place in heaven by being or doing good.⁹⁰ Believers are saved by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9). This doctrine is affirmed throughout the New Testament (Rom 3:23-28; Titus 3:5-7; Gal 3:2-5). Moreover, salvation is a free gift received by faith.⁹¹ Faith is the means by which one

⁸⁶ Bock, *Ephesians*, 70.

⁸⁷ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018), 473.

⁸⁸ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 473.

⁸⁹ Barna, *Full Release #8*, 1.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 68.

receives the benefits of salvation.⁹² Salvation cannot be earned through performance or achieved through any amount of good works. Bock says, "No product of our lives saves us (Rom 3:28; 4:4– 5; 9:32– 33; 11:6; Gal 2:16; 3:2– 5, 7, 9; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 3:5). Salvation is not a reward; it is a gift. No one is in a position to say, 'I gained salvation by my labor.'"⁹³

The Resurrection and the Cross

All that Christ accomplished through the cross is effectual because of His resurrection.⁹⁴ The resurrection of Jesus vindicated His work on the cross.⁹⁵ Thus, the cross and the resurrection are essential to a believer's salvation. On this, Wayne Grudem shares that by raising Christ, God the Father was approving of the work of Jesus and its efficacy to save and forgive.⁹⁶

Justification and forgiveness are found not only in the cross but in the resurrection. On this, Michael Bird shares that forgiveness and justification are based on the resurrection of Jesus.⁹⁷ The resurrection was the message the early church proclaimed, and that message promised forgiveness of sins through Jesus' resurrection.⁹⁸ Timothy Keller adds that the resurrection is God's way of saying believers will never have to pay for their sins again.⁹⁹

The cross does not complete the work of the resurrection; instead, the resurrection of Jesus is what seals and makes effective the work of the cross.¹⁰⁰ The cross is not enough without

⁹² Bock, *Ephesians*, 66.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁹⁴ Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 30.

⁹⁵ Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 307.

⁹⁶ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 756.

⁹⁷ Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 443.

⁹⁸ Mohler, *The Apostles' Creed*, 96.

⁹⁹ Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 32.

¹⁰⁰ Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 17.

the resurrection.¹⁰¹ Further, in the resurrection, Christ does more than seal the work of the cross; instead, His resurrection is also an atoning work.¹⁰² In the resurrection, Christ defeats death and secures eternal life for those who are in Him.¹⁰³ This is not to say that the life and death of Jesus are lesser than the resurrection. Instead, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the gospel.¹⁰⁴

The Resurrection and Behavior

The resurrection of Jesus is how believers are raised to new life and can serve and love God faithfully.¹⁰⁵ Through the resurrection, believers are joined to the risen Lord and are empowered to live free from sin.¹⁰⁶ Not only is the resurrection the means by which one lives a godly life, but it is also the motivation for life. The Apostle Paul staked his entire ministry on the fact of the resurrection.¹⁰⁷ Paul notes that he sacrifices himself in ministry in light of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:29-34). Moreover, since believers are united to the risen Lord, they have joined Him on His mission to rescue the world.¹⁰⁸

The central message of the early church was the resurrection of Jesus.¹⁰⁹ The resurrection was the reason the apostles went from disowning Jesus prior to His crucifixion to boldly proclaiming the gospel and facing death doing so.¹¹⁰ The resurrection was the central reason the

¹⁰¹ Ross Clifford and Philip Johnson, *The Cross Is Not Enough: Living as Witnesses to the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012).

¹⁰² Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 34.

¹⁰³ Mohler, *The Apostles' Creed*, 101.

¹⁰⁴ Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 78.

¹⁰⁵ Keener, *1 Peter*, 224.

¹⁰⁶ David E. Garland, *Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont, IL InterVarsity Press, 2021), 150.

¹⁰⁷ Moo, *A Theology of Paul*, 155.

¹⁰⁸ Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 88.

¹⁰⁹ Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 3.

¹¹⁰ Stephen H. Smith, “‘Seeing Things’: ‘Best Explanations’ and the Resurrection of Jesus,” *Heythrop Journal* 61, no. 4 (2020): 693.

Apostle Paul gave thanks to God.¹¹¹ Believing in the resurrection is not simply affirming a historical fact but fully surrendering to the reality that Jesus is Lord, Life, and Savior.¹¹² This results in a life that is committed to the mission of Christ in this world.¹¹³

One of the gaps in the literature is the balance between salvation and sanctification, especially regarding the resurrection. The resurrection is the means to being justified and the means by which one grows, matures, and lives godly. Hastings writes, "This makes all pursuit of godliness in the process of sanctification evangelical (that is, of the gospel) and not legal. This means that the ordering of our affections and the purifying of our actions is not an ongoing performance to secure the yes of God, his approval. We live in that approval. We bask in his complacent delight in Christ, and therefore in us."¹¹⁴

The resurrection is both the grounds of salvation and sanctification. It is the means to be saved and the means by which the risen Christ empowers His people to live godly. On this, Timothy Keller shares that obedience to God is not how one saves themselves but how one imitates the One who saved them.¹¹⁵

The Person of Jesus and the Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus not only brings about new realities for those who believe but also declares something about Jesus. The resurrection does not make Jesus something He is not; instead, the resurrection proves and declares who Jesus has always been.¹¹⁶ Thus, Jesus has

¹¹¹ Andries G. Van Aarde, "Reflective Perspectives on Paul," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*, 74, no. 4 (2018): 5.

¹¹² Wright and Bird, *The New Testament in Its World*, 330.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 23-24.

¹¹⁵ Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 131.

¹¹⁶ Garland, *Acts*, 54.

always been Lord. David Garland shares that the resurrection means humanity can see Jesus as Lord despite His death.¹¹⁷

That Jesus is Lord is not only essential to understanding who He is but is also essential to a believer's salvation. In confessing that Jesus is Lord, one is confessing His resurrection. Moreover, one's salvation is received in part by confessing that Jesus is Lord (Rom 10:9-10). On this, Ross Hastings shares, "Saying that Jesus Christ is Lord is almost another way of saying that he has risen from the dead!"¹¹⁸

Concerning the person of Jesus, the resurrection means that Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord of all, God's Son, the kingly High Priest, and the Head of the Church.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the resurrection means that God verified the teachings of Jesus and that what He said was the truth.¹²⁰ Theologian John Stott conveys, "The argument is not that his resurrection establishes his deity, but that it fits with it."¹²¹ Moreover, the resurrection of Jesus means that He was not merely a good teacher or example to follow; He was and is God incarnate.¹²² As Stecher and Blomberg share, "Either Jesus was God incarnate or he was irrelevant. There was no middle ground."¹²³ In sum, Michael Bird says:

First, the resurrection tells us who Jesus really is. The resurrection is concrete proof that Jesus really was the Messiah. He was not a false prophet, not a royal pretender, not a lunatic, not a mere martyr. The resurrection is the divine sign that Jesus was given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18), vindicated from false accusations (1 Tim

¹¹⁷ Garland, *Acts*, 54.

¹¹⁸ Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 112.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹²⁰ Habermas, *Risen Indeed*, 188.

¹²¹ John Stott, *Basic Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), 62.

¹²² Stecher and Blomberg, *Resurrection*, 143.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

3:16), marked out as God's Son (Rom 1:4), designated as the heir of all things (Heb 1:2), and installed as Messiah and Lord (Acts 2:36).¹²⁴

Summary

While some attention has been given to the soteriological implications of the resurrection, there is a disconnect in how the event of the resurrection is the assurance of one's salvation. The result is that many do not understand what it means to be saved and how one is saved. While the literature on the historicity and the evidence for the resurrection is ample, there has not been a focused study on how that connects with one's salvation. Moreover, many conflate sanctification and justification, thinking that one is saved by what they do for God. Thus, one needs to know that the resurrection of Jesus provides both the means to be saved and the means by which one is set apart for God, as N.T. Wright highlights, "There is no evidence for a form of early Christianity in which the resurrection was not a central belief. Nor was this belief, as it were, bolted onto Christianity at the edge. It was the central driving force, informing the whole movement."¹²⁵

Theological Foundations

The resurrection of Jesus is the focal point of the gospel and the Christian faith. This section will develop a theological argument on the necessity of the resurrection and its soteriological implications. As James Dunn notes, one of the earliest creeds and messages preached after the death and resurrection of Jesus says that the resurrection is of first

¹²⁴ Michael F. Bird, *What Christians Ought to Believe* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2016), 155.

¹²⁵ N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 133.

importance.¹²⁶ Moreover, this section will unpack the biblical need to connect one's salvation to the resurrection of Jesus. While the resurrection of Jesus is a dominant theme in the New Testament, the Old Testament also bears witness to the reality of the resurrection of Jesus (Isa 53:10; Ps 16:8-1; Jonah 2:1-3:2). On this, the Apostle Paul says that Jesus rose on the third day "in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:4, ESV).

Tim Keller writes that most Christians, and systematic theologies, give far more attention to the cross than the resurrection of Jesus.¹²⁷ Moreover, he says, "When most Christians give a 'gospel' presentation to explain how we can be saved, they talk exclusively about the cross and make the resurrection an afterthought or leave it out altogether."¹²⁸ Markus Barth and Verne H. Fletcher say that many make the crucifixion the primary expression of the Christ event.¹²⁹ Furthermore, Sam Allberry writes that believers, while focusing on the resurrection of Jesus every Easter Sunday, "then effectively stick it back in a drawer for the rest of the year" because they are "at a loss to know what to do with it."¹³⁰ However, whenever the gospel was preached in the New Testament, the resurrection is mentioned and is what lies at the gospel's core.¹³¹ Peter Kreft and Ronald Tacelli summarize the implications if Christ had not been raised, saying, "Christian preaching is useless, Christian faith is useless, Christians are false witnesses about

¹²⁶ James D. G. Dunn, *Remembering Jesus*. Vol. 1 of Christianity in the Making (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 855.

¹²⁷ Keller, *Hope In Times of Fear*, xix.

¹²⁸ Keller, *Hope In Times of Fear*, xix.

¹²⁹ Markus Barth and Verne H. Fletcher, *Acquittal by Resurrection* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehard and Winston, 1964), v.

¹³⁰ Sam Allberry, *Lifted: Experiencing the Resurrection Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2012), 15–16.

¹³¹ Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 171.

God, Christian faith is futile, Christians are unforgiven and in their sins, those who have died are lost, and those who hope in Christ are pitiable.”¹³²

Jesus predicted His death, burial, and resurrection by saying the story of Jonah is what will happen to Him (Matt 12:40). Jesus used this story as an analogy for Himself. The context and purpose of this passage are to reveal that apart from the resurrection, nothing Jesus does matters. Moreover, the story of Jonah was a “cryptic prophecy of the death and resurrection of Jesus.”¹³³ Concerning this passage, New Testament scholar Craig Blomberg writes:

The sign that Jesus has in mind is not the crucifixion per se, but rather the resurrection. Just as Jonah's time in the fish would have proved meaningless had he not been spat up onto the shore to continue his appointed ministry of preaching repentance to Nineveh, so also the crucifixion is not the decisive sign of who Jesus was, for his subsequent rescue from death is what vindicated his ministry and enabled his mission to go forward.¹³⁴

In Isaiah 53, the will of the Lord is that the suffering servant will have prolonged days (Isa 53:10). God will prolong his days by resurrection.¹³⁵ Isaiah does not go into detail on the resurrection of Jesus; however, it is implied in this passage. Moreover, the suffering servant in Isaiah 53 is said to make intercession for those who transgress (Isa 53:12). Biblical scholar Alec Motyer, commenting on this passage, writes that the phrase “make intercession” could “refer to his mediatorial intercession whereby he ‘saves to the uttermost’ (Heb 7:25): his work as mediator.”¹³⁶ Jesus's work as the mediator is only possible because He “always lives to make

¹³² Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 176-177.

¹³³ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 326.

¹³⁴ Craig Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale, and D. A. Carson, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 45.

¹³⁵ Paul D. Wegner, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 237.

¹³⁶ Alec J. Motyer, *Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 383.

intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). Thus, Jesus can only make intercession for the believer because of the resurrection.

The apostles, Paul and Peter, both used the book of Psalms to preach on the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:22-32; 13:34-37). Peter uses Psalm 16:8-11 as a scriptural proof text to support the resurrection.¹³⁷ Peter argues that Psalm 16 predicted the resurrection of Jesus.¹³⁸ Peter argued this to prove that Jesus was Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). Thus, Jesus's lordship and title as Christ is only possible because of the resurrection. Moreover, the Apostle Paul cites Psalm 16:10 to show how the resurrection of Jesus was predicted.¹³⁹ Furthermore, Paul's logic is that forgiveness of sins is only made available because of the resurrection (Acts 13:36-37).¹⁴⁰ In addition, Paul says that through belief in Jesus, one is justified (Acts 13:39). As New Testament Scholar John B. Polhill writes, “Only in Christ is one truly ‘justified,’ forgiven of sin, and acceptable to God.”¹⁴¹

The resurrection of Jesus is means of the new birth for believers (1 Pet 1:3). On this passage, Grudem writes, "The resurrection of Christ from the dead secures for his people both new resurrection bodies and new spiritual life."¹⁴² Moreover, the work of making believers new

¹³⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 123.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 457.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 458.

¹⁴¹ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 305.

¹⁴² Grudem, *1 Peter*, 61.

creations only happens because of Jesus's resurrection.¹⁴³ Therefore, the basis of one's new life in Christ is found through the resurrection of Jesus.¹⁴⁴

A similar concept is found in 1 Peter 3, where Peter links the resurrection of Jesus to salvation (1 Pet 3:21). Grudem says that "Our union with him in his resurrection is the means by which God gives us new life."¹⁴⁵ This passage teaches that baptism, not water baptism, but an appeal to God, is what saves a believer.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, this appeal to God is based on the resurrection of Jesus and not on the promises of the believer.¹⁴⁷

The resurrection of Jesus establishes a believer's justification.¹⁴⁸ Tom Schreiner adds, "Jesus's resurrection authenticates and confirms that our justification has been secured."¹⁴⁹ Moreover, he adds that Jesus's resurrection proves that His work is complete on the believer's behalf.¹⁵⁰ This is not to say that the cross and resurrection should be separated. Instead, as Bruce notes, Jesus's "sacrificial death would not have been efficacious apart from the resurrection."¹⁵¹ Therefore, Romans 4:25 is clear that "it is not just the death of Jesus but also his resurrection that saves us."¹⁵²

¹⁴³ Scot McKnight, *1 Peter*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 50.

¹⁴⁴ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 88.

¹⁴⁵ Grudem, *1 Peter*, 173.

¹⁴⁶ Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Chicago, IL: Eerdmans, 1990), 116.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 -2 Peter and Jude*, The Christian Standard Commentary (B&H Publishing Group, 2020) 192.

¹⁴⁸ Michael F. Bird, *Romans*, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 152.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 260.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁵¹ F. F. Bruce, *Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (InterVarsity Press, Westmont, IL, 2008), 124.

¹⁵² Keller, *Hope In Times of Fear*, xix.

The Apostle Paul goes on to say that believers are saved by the life of Christ (Rom 5:10). New Testament scholar Douglas Moo says this phrase means “that the new life won by Christ and in which believers share is the means by which they will be saved in the judgment.”¹⁵³ Moreover, Gorman adds, “The attribution of future salvation to Christ’s life at the end of 5:10 is a reference to the resurrection as the guarantor of hope and salvation, as well as to the current intercessory work of the Son before the Father.”¹⁵⁴ Thus, as Michael Bird says, a believer’s salvation “remains dependent on the continuing life of Christ.”¹⁵⁵

The writer of Hebrews argues that a believer is saved completely because Jesus always lives to make intercession for them (Heb 7:25). John MacArthur says, “The security of our salvation is Jesus’ perpetual intercession for us.”¹⁵⁶ The context of this passage is that in contrast to the priests of the Old Covenant, Jesus’s priesthood is permanent since He does not die (Heb 7:23-24). New Testament scholar Peter O’Brien affirms this by saying, “The conclusion drawn from the fact that the resurrected and ascended Jesus lives forever and has a permanent priesthood is that he is able to save his people completely or forever.”¹⁵⁷ Therefore, the resurrection is why Jesus lives forever and secures believers their salvation.¹⁵⁸ As Keller says, “Only a risen Christ can intercede for us.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 190.

¹⁵⁴ Gorman, *Romans*, 252.

¹⁵⁵ Bird, *Romans*, 166.

¹⁵⁶ John MacArthur, *Hebrews*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1983), 282.

¹⁵⁷ Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 245.

¹⁵⁸ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 155.

¹⁵⁹ Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 39.

The resurrection of Jesus secures believers' salvation. Jesus assures believers that nothing can snatch them from His hand (John 10:28-29) and that He will not lose or cast anyone out (John 6:37-40). As scholar Jey J. Kanagaraj says, "Jesus will not fail in keeping those who believe in Him."¹⁶⁰ Moreover, Jude 24 says that Christ will present the church blameless. Tom Schreiner, commenting on this verse, says, "When Jude speaks of God's ability to keep believers from falling, he does not merely mean that believers might be kept from falling. The idea is that God will keep them from falling by his grace."¹⁶¹

The necessity of the resurrection is clearly articulated in 1 Corinthians 15. The Apostle Paul says that if Christ has not been raised, a believer's faith is in vain and futile, and they are still in their sins (1 Cor 15:14-17). However, as Keller notes, believers are not in their sins, and this passage means "that because Christ is raised, we are not 'in our sins.' Rather, as Paul says over one hundred times in his letters, you are in him, in Christ."¹⁶² The Apostle Paul places the entire Christian faith on the resurrection's historicity. Therefore, to properly understand one's salvation, one must connect it to the resurrection. This is why Gary Habermas says, "The evidences for Jesus's resurrection are likewise evidences for believers' eternal life."¹⁶³

The resurrection of Jesus is also the believer's spiritual resurrection. Throughout the New Testament, believers are said to be raised with Christ (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12; 3:1). This implies that what is true of Christ becomes true of every believer.¹⁶⁴ Put another way, what happened to Christ is now true of the believer. Since Christ has risen and defeated death, the believer does not

¹⁶⁰ Jey J. Kanagaraj, *John: A New Covenant Commentary*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 142.

¹⁶¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, *The New American Commentary*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 2003), 31.

¹⁶² Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 32-33.

¹⁶³ Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 1st ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 164.

¹⁶⁴ Bird, *Romans*, 152.

have to fear death (Heb 2:14). Additionally, since Jesus rose from the dead and is seated at the Father's right hand, so too, believers are spiritually raised and seated with Christ in the heavenlies even now (Eph 2:6). On this, Keller says, "We are already raised and seated in the heavenly places. As we have seen, all that language is to say that we are as loved and forgiven, as accepted and sure of salvation as if we had already died and were literally seated in heaven."¹⁶⁵

The resurrection of Jesus is the basis for a believer's bodily resurrection. The four Gospels teach that Jesus was raised bodily and that His tomb was empty (Mark 16:1-6; Matt 28:1-7; Luke 24:1-8; John 20:1-9).¹⁶⁶ The book of Acts affirms this teaching (Acts 1:3). Moreover, Acts teaches that there will be a future resurrection for believers (Acts 10:42; 24:15). The Apostle Paul teaches that believers resurrected bodies will be imperishable, glorified, powerful, spiritual, and changed (1 Cor 15:42-50).¹⁶⁷ Habermas says, "Repeatedly, Paul and other New Testament authors assert that Jesus's resurrection was a model of the believers' resurrected body."¹⁶⁸

The resurrection of Jesus assures the believer here and now. As Keller notes, believers can be confident that God accepts, pardons, and justifies them.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, the resurrection places believers in Christ, where there is now no condemnation (Rom 8:1).¹⁷⁰ Thus, believers are to boldly go to God's throne of grace (Heb 4:16). Furthermore, believers are to have confidence on judgment day because of the completed work of Christ (1 John 4:17).

¹⁶⁵ Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 127-128.

¹⁶⁶ Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 156.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 157.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 128.

¹⁷⁰ Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 27.

The resurrection of Christ gives the church His Spirit and promises future resurrection (Rom 8:11). Michael Bird says, “There is a future life that is yet to arrive in the form of the resurrection of the coming age.”¹⁷¹ Thus, Christ's promise to be with His church to the end is possible because He is alive (Matt 28:20). God will never forsake or leave the believer because Jesus always lives (Heb 13:5, 7:25). Darrell Bock says, “The indwelling Spirit is a guarantee that God will keep his commitment in Christ.”¹⁷² Moreover, George Guthrie adds, “God’s people have been sealed, marking their identity and guaranteeing their final inheritance.”¹⁷³ In sum, Tim Keller says:

The Biblical view of all things is resurrection—not a future that is just a consolation for the life we never had but a restoration of the life you always wanted. This means that every horrible thing that ever happened will not only be undone and repaired but will, in some way, make the eventual glory and joy even greater.¹⁷⁴

The resurrection of Jesus provides the power and motive for godliness. Paul teaches that Christians are to walk properly in light of what is to come (Rom 13:11). Keller says, “If Jesus was raised from the dead, it changes everything: how we conduct relationships, our attitudes toward wealth and power, how we work in our vocations, our understanding and practice of sexuality, race relations, and justice.”¹⁷⁵ Christ lives in the believer as the source of actions that please God (Phil 2:13; Gal 2:20). Michael Gorman captures this well by saying, “Paul connects both the motive for and the goal of spirituality to the death and resurrection of Jesus, just as elsewhere he connects the form of spirituality to Jesus’ death and resurrection.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Bird, *Romans*, 264.

¹⁷² Bock, *Ephesians*, 76.

¹⁷³ George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 115.

¹⁷⁴ Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2008), 32.

¹⁷⁵ Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, xx.

¹⁷⁶ Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 47.

Summary

The resurrection of Jesus, as seen above, does more than merely vindicate Jesus as Lord. The event of the resurrection was the launching pad of the Christian faith. Moreover, as Keller says, “The resurrection means that we do not merely follow the teachings of a dead leader. Rather, we have vital, loving fellowship with a living Lord. Jesus the King is present with us.”¹⁷⁷ Moreover, the resurrection of Jesus does not merely provide salvation but is also the source of living the Christian life. Jesus captured this in John 11:25 when he said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” D.A. Carson notes that Jesus attempts to get Martha to realize that he alone is the source of the resurrection.¹⁷⁸ Further, Carson says, “Just as he not only gives the bread from heaven (6:27) but is himself the bread of life (6:35), so also he not only raises the dead on the last day (5:21, 25ff.) but is himself the resurrection and the life. There is neither resurrection nor eternal life outside of him.”¹⁷⁹ As Gerald O’Collins says, “In a profound sense, Christianity without the resurrection is not simply Christianity without its final chapter. It is not Christianity at all.”¹⁸⁰

John reported on the signs of Jesus, including the resurrection, to cause faith in the readers of his gospel (John 20:30-31). Jesus predicted this sign in His response in John 2:18-22. Thus, many scholars argue that the crucifixion and the resurrection was a sign of Jesus reported by John.¹⁸¹ As Colin Kruse writes, “The purpose of the Fourth Gospel is that people might

¹⁷⁷ Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 38.

¹⁷⁸ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 372.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Gerald O’Collins, *The Easter Jesus* (London: Darton, Long-man & Todd, 1973), 134.

¹⁸¹ See also Frederick Dale, Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 1158. Gerald L. Borchert, *John*, Vol. 25b, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 319.

recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God and put their faith in him.”¹⁸²

Theoretical Foundations

As noted in the literature review, adequate attention has not been given to how the resurrection of Jesus connects to soteriology. While Keller and Hastings have written popular-level books on the topic, there has not been a concentrated study on the current thesis. The researcher is not proposing a new doctrine or theory; instead, the researcher is connecting the dots between two doctrines and synthesizing current research.

The necessity of this action research project came from the realization that a study or curriculum does not exist that focused on both the historicity of the resurrection and its soteriological implications. If the resurrection is the most important doctrine of the Christian faith, then understanding the resurrection is essential to being a Christian. Thus, through this study, the researcher will teach and correct members of Life Church in these important areas. Moreover, the study will use a small group model to foster this thesis.

Nonetheless, ample resources exist on the resurrection of Jesus and defending the Christian faith. Scholars and Christian apologists Frank Turek, Norm Geisler, William Lane Craig, Gary Habermas, Sean and Josh McDowell, and Tim Keller have all produced books, study guides, articles, and videos addressing the historicity of the resurrection.¹⁸³ Moreover, they have also taught how to defend the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus. Furthermore, Wayne

¹⁸² Colin G. Kruse, *John* (Chicago, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 380.

¹⁸³ See Frank Turek and Norm Geisler, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be An Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004); William L. Craig, *The Son Rises: Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017); Gary Habermas, *Risen Indeed: A Historical Investigation Into the Resurrection of Jesus* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021); Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Life Changing Truth for a Skeptical World* (Nashville, TN: Harper Collins, 2017). See also, www.crossexamined.org; www.seanmcdowell.org; www.reasonablefaith.org; www.timothykeller.com.

Grudem, Michael Bird, and Millard Erickson have all written systematic theology books that deal with soteriology extensively.¹⁸⁴

Barna's research revealed this about the current status of what believers think about salvation:

Most surprising in the latest findings from the American Worldview Inventory 2020 is that a majority of people who describe themselves as Christian (52 percent) accept a "works-oriented" means to God's acceptance. More shockingly, huge proportions of people associated with churches whose official doctrine says eternal salvation comes only from embracing Jesus Christ as savior believe that a person can qualify for Heaven by being or doing good.¹⁸⁵

In addition, a similar study from Barna revealed that “nearly 6 out of 10 people who claim to be born-again do not meet the widely accepted, biblical definition of born-again.”¹⁸⁶ The research found that only 44 percent of people who identify as born-again believe one must confess their sins and accept Jesus Christ as Savior to get to heaven.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, the study also found that 60 percent of this group believe they can earn their way to heaven.¹⁸⁸

Based on the research mentioned, the idea that a Sunday sermon is adequate to teach the complexities of the entire counsel of God seems to be lacking. Thus, the need for a particular study on the resurrection and salvation. This is not to say Scripture is not sufficient. Instead, this is saying believers need more Scripture. As Grudem says, "The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and

¹⁸⁴ See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology, Second Edition: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020); Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology, Second Edition: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020); Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013).

¹⁸⁵ Barna, *Full Release #8*, 1.

¹⁸⁶ George Barna, *Full Release #6: What Does It Mean When People Say They Are “Christian”?* (Glendale, AZ: Cultural Research Center, Arizona Christian University, August 31, 2021), 3, https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CRC_AWVI2021_Release06_Digital_01_20210831.pdf.

¹⁸⁷ Barna, *Full Release #8*, 3.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

for obeying him perfectly."¹⁸⁹ The Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 4 that God gave workers of the gospel to the church to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4:11-12). Moreover, Paul teaches that "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17, ESV).

The action research study will teach the truthfulness of the resurrection and its soteriological implications and train the members in how to articulate and share the truth of the resurrection. Further, the hope is that through clear and biblical teaching, the members of Life Church will be able to fully articulate and know what they believe about the resurrection and salvation.

The framework of this research action project is to allow Scripture to train, correct, teach, and rebuke the members of Life Church. This is done by creating a study focused on the resurrection and its soteriological implications. The theory is that by doing this, participants will not conform to the patterns of this world but be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Rom 12:2). Moreover, the theory is that if they learn this, they will be able to be prepared to give a defense to anyone who asks and a reason for the hope that is within them (1 Pet 3:15). Dallas Willard says, "The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as 'Christians' will become disciples – students, apprentices, practitioners – of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 220.

¹⁹⁰ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006), xv.

A teaching model that will undergird the study is the andragogical model conceptualized by Malcolm Knowles.¹⁹¹ Andragogy is “the art and science of helping adults (or maturing human beings) learn.”¹⁹² This model develops believers to think about ideas for themselves and is built on the premise that adult learners are responsible for their learning.¹⁹³ Consistent with Knowles' approach, this will be done through a small group setting, enabling collaboration in the learning experience.¹⁹⁴ The benefit of this model is that experience provides the basis of the study, the study will have immediate relevance to their life, and the group problem is at the center of the study. These benefits are also part of the four principles Knowles suggests should be applied to adult learning.¹⁹⁵

The researcher will use this model with an understanding of some of its critiques, such as this model can cater to an idealization of the learner.¹⁹⁶ Nonetheless, the researcher will facilitate the discussion toward God's perfection and glory, not theirs. The researcher will also constantly point back to the authority, inerrancy, and source of truth, God's Word, as the ultimate source of truth. Moreover, the researcher will remind and discuss how applying God's Word and renewing one's mind is a lifelong journey, not a quick fix.

The lessons will be pre-recorded and watched by each participant before the weekly meeting. Recent research has revealed that "videos lead to better student learning than many

¹⁹¹ See Malcolm Knowles, *The Making of An Adult Educator* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1989) and Kenneth O. Gangel, *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Adult Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1997).

¹⁹² Malcolm S. Knowles, “Contributions of Malcolm Knowles,” in *The Christian Handbook of Adult Education*, ed. Kenneth O. Gangel and James C. Wilhoit (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 96.

¹⁹³ Gangel, *The Christian Educator's Handbook*, 156.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁹⁵ Malcolm Knowles, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species* (Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing, 1984), 87.

¹⁹⁶ Knowles, *Contributions of Malcolm Knowles*, 95.

other teaching methods, even when compared with face-to-face teaching.”¹⁹⁷ While a criticism of video lecturers has been the lack of interaction, the researcher ensured there was group discussion over text and in person on the video.

Small group methods will be utilized. These methods are rooted in the model found in Acts 2:42-47 and include fellowship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism, and worship.¹⁹⁸ These activities are what summarized the early church’s community life.¹⁹⁹ The group at Life Church already has a rich history of fellowship; thus, the researcher will continue to keep this tradition alive. The discipleship portion will happen through the teaching of God's Word and applying God's Word to enhance the group's understanding of the resurrection of Christ.²⁰⁰ Mark Dever says discipleship is “deliberately doing spiritual good to someone so that he or she will be more like Christ.”²⁰¹

As part of God's call on Christians' lives, ministry will collectively happen by meeting one another's needs during the study and in the contexts of life.²⁰² The study will foster this by allowing members the opportunity to help one another understand God's Word better, learn from one another, and help one another apply God's truth to their situations. As McClendon and Lockhart say, "The point of the gathering is for various believers with various spiritual gifts to work together to equip the saints for the work of ministry. We are all to use our gifting to edify,

¹⁹⁷ Michael Noetel, Griffith, S., Delaney, O., Sanders, T., Parker, P., del Pozo Cruz, B., & Lonsdale, C. “Video Improves Learning in Higher Education: A Systematic Review,” *Review of Educational Research*, 91(2), 204–236. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654321990713>.

¹⁹⁸ Steve Gladen, *Leading Small Groups with Purpose: Everything You Need to Lead a Healthy Group* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 26-27.

¹⁹⁹ Darrell Bock, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 149.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁰¹ Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Crossway, 2016), 13.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

encourage, and build up the body of Christ so that we all mature, grow, and attain the unity of the faith.”²⁰³

Evangelism is the fruit of the study. One of the learning objectives is for participants to defend their faith clearly and concisely. Moreover, the study facilitator will train the members to defend their faith to reach the lost. Lastly, worship is the way in which the study is done as the group offers themselves to God. The researcher will foster an environment where members are offering themselves to God as living sacrifices and instruments to Him (Rom 6:13; 12:2).

The practice of paying attention will be introduced as a model for this project. While one may not find this practice in spiritual discipline books, the practice is found in Hebrews 2. In Hebrews 2:1, the writer instructs the people to “pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it” (ESV). Furthermore, the writer of Hebrews also teaches that one is to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering” (Heb 10:23, ESV). These passages imply that believers must actively practice paying attention and holding fast to what they believe.

Conclusion

Since the resurrection of Jesus makes the Christian faith futile or not, it is essential to understand the resurrection of Jesus. Moreover, it is essential for members of Life Church to understand the historicity of the resurrection and how the resurrection is effective in their salvation. This action research project will synthesize and craft a study that teaches the resurrection and its soteriological implications. If members of Life Church cannot defend the resurrection, they cannot defend their faith. Thus, the study will correct false beliefs and help members of Life Church clearly articulate and defend what they believe.

²⁰³ McClendon and Lockhart, *Timeless Church*, 41.

One cannot understand the power and message of the gospel apart from the resurrection. As mentioned in the literature review, the resurrection is the foundation of every major doctrine in the Christian faith. One cannot properly believe the gospel, live out the Christian life, or love their neighbor without understanding how the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation and source of those things. The hope and power of the Christian life sit on the resurrection of Jesus. In sum, this action research project is essential because knowing the resurrection is essential.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Chapter three outlines and describes how the research problem of this action research project is addressed. One of the key reasons for Life Church not understanding the resurrection and its soteriological implication is insufficient teaching on salvation and a lack of attention toward the resurrection of Jesus. As mentioned above, previous teachings did not have one message on the resurrection or how the resurrection of Jesus applies to one's salvation. While numerous variables contribute to this problem, if insufficient teaching is the main variable, then implementing a study on the resurrection of Jesus will help members understand the resurrection of Jesus and its relationship to salvation.

Two criteria are used for evaluating the outcomes of the intervention. The first is the ability of members of Life Church to articulate and defend the resurrection. The second criteria is how well Life Church members understand salvation, the resurrection of Jesus, and how the resurrection of Jesus saves them.

The researcher will use three tools to gather data and measure the effects of the intervention. The first is a survey administered before and after the study. This survey assesses the participant's existing understanding of the resurrection of Jesus and its soteriological implications. This survey measures how well one understands the resurrection of Jesus and its historicity. The survey will be conducted through Google Surveys. The post-study survey will be used to compare the results from the pre-study survey to assess the participant's comprehension. The second tool will be a pre- and post-study interview that will gauge Life Church's knowledge

of the resurrection of Jesus and its soteriological implications. The interview will be done in person. The third tool is a research journal in which the researcher will journal his observations and analyses of the participant's behaviors.

The intervention plan for this project is a five-lesson study on the resurrection of Jesus for members of Life Church designed and taught by the researcher. The study is about what Scripture, history, and contemporary scholarship teach concerning the resurrection and salvation. After this study, members will understand what Scripture teaches about the resurrection and its soteriological implications and defend this material when they encounter skeptics.

The study on the resurrection of Jesus utilizes content that is not original to the researcher (Figure 1). A mix of contemporary scholarship, scriptural exposition, and historical church teaching is used to explain the resurrection of Jesus, its historicity, and its theological implications. The aim of this study is for members to be convinced of the hope of salvation that is in Jesus Christ and to be able to make a defense of that hope (1 Pet 3:15). This happens by members renewing their minds (Rom 12:2), and knowing what they believe so that they are not carried away (Eph 4:14).

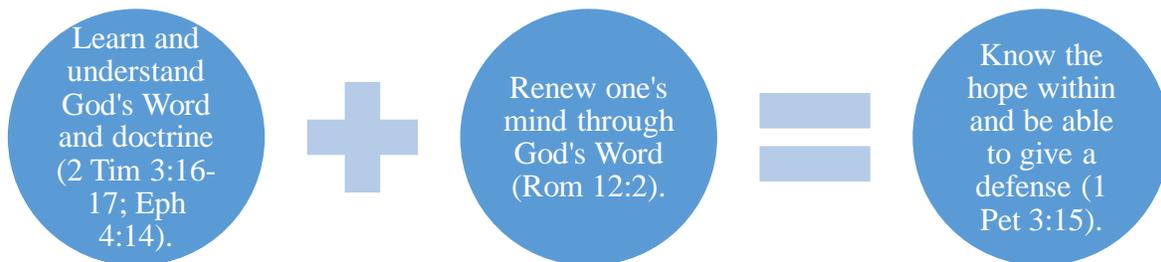


Figure 1. Structure of the study

Intervention Design

After IRB approval was given, the researcher contacted all the adult members of Life Church via text and email to invite their participation in the project and provide the proposed study dates on the resurrection (see Appendix A and Appendix H). Once approval by the leaders of Life Church was granted and once participants and the mentor agreed upon the dates, the project began. The researcher emailed each participant and explained the project, how the study would unfold, the criteria for their eligibility, and the process for getting consent from the participants (see Appendix A and B), and issued the pre-study survey to those who qualified to participate (Appendix C). The criteria for their eligibility were whether they believed in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and if they were willing to participate in the study. The criteria for their participation were if they committed to do the surveys, participate in the interview, and be a part of the entire study with the understanding that they can indeed terminate their participation at any time. Moreover, the participants needed to be over eighteen years of age.

As part of the recruitment email, participants were asked to confirm that they are over eighteen years old, are believers in Jesus Christ, and were willing to participate in the study (see Appendix A). Next, the participants signed a consent form (see Appendix B). The consent form was explained over email, and the participants could call the researcher for any additional questions or clarifications. The maximum number of participants would be twenty, and the minimum would be six. The researcher hoped for a mix of male and female participants who were eager to learn.

The researcher emailed the recruitment letter to the potential participants in the study (see Appendix A). The researcher explained to the participants that their understanding of the resurrection of Christ and its soteriological significance would be enhanced by participating in

the study. Further explanations on the details of the study and what their participation will involve, including the survey, were also given (see Appendix A and C).

The researcher received approval from the leaders of Life Church to conduct this project (see Appendix E), which included the implementation of the study on the resurrection and its soteriological implications, conducting a survey before and after the study to gauge the participants' level of learning during the study, and interviewing each participant (see Appendix D). The location of each week's lesson was at the leaders of Life Church home. This provided the participants with a familiar and safe environment since they had regularly met there before the study.

For the pre-study survey, the researcher used Google forms to create the survey. Next, the researcher texted and emailed the participants the survey to complete. Once the surveys were finished from all participants, the researcher downloaded the responses to an excel sheet. For the pre-study interview, the researcher scheduled a time with each participant to interview them face-to-face. During the interview, the researcher asked each question and would elaborate, if needed, on some questions. The interview was recorded with the voice memos app on an iPhone and transcribed through the online transcription service Rev.¹

The researcher used the transcriptions to read through the interviews as well as listen to the audio to analyze the participants' understanding of the resurrection of Jesus. The answers helped the researcher understand his participants' comprehension of the subject matter. The interviews also helped confirm the researcher's problem statement. The transcriptions from the interviews and the survey responses were stored on the researcher's computer, which is password protected. Further, the interviews were also in a password-protected folder.

¹ "Rev.com," last accessed February 18, 2023. <https://www.rev.com>.

The next task was to teach the five lesson study to the group (see Appendix G for the lesson plans). The lessons happened in real time, except for the teaching portion, which had a recorded video to cover the material and stay focused on the topic.² Moreover, each lesson helped the participants learn what they believe. JP Moreland says that “when people learn what they believe and why, they become bold in their witness and attractive in the way they engage others in debate or dialogue.”³ In addition, there was a group discussion to let the members communicate what they learned in the lesson. Further, the participants used a group text to discuss what was being taught and learned during the lesson and study time. As Kenneth Gangel notes, "Combine the lecture with audience involvement methods such as discussion, reaction groups, or a question and answer period. This allows for feedback and allows the lecturer to clarify any concepts which might not have been understood by his audience."⁴ Moreover, this will help them articulate what they are learning and what they believe. The power of small groups is articulated by Professor Robert Coleman. He says, "They gathered at home, where they lived their faith every day. In this relaxed atmosphere they learned together even as they shared one another's burdens. What better place could there be for the people of God to experience the closeness of their love?"⁵

The lesson plans were based on andragogical and pedagogical criteria. Knowles' andragogical guidelines emphasize the importance of tailoring instruction to adult learners' needs and characteristics and creating a supportive, engaging, and relevant learning environment for

² Kenneth O. Gangel, *24 Ways to Improve Your Teaching* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 27.

³ J.P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason In the Life of the Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997), 31.

⁴ Gangel, *24 Ways to Improve Your Teaching*, 28.

⁵ Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2020), 70.

their lives and goals.⁶ John Hattie's pedagogical criteria focus on high-impact teaching practices, such as feedback, classroom discussion, and formative assessment.⁷ Each lesson also provided personal relevance for the participants since adults are more likely to learn when they can view the relevance of the subject matter.⁸ In other words, adult learners need to know why they should learn a particular subject.⁹ For example, the lessons were structured to first reveal the need for understanding the resurrection and then explain the relevance of the resurrection. Moreover, each lesson had discussion questions about applying the information to their lives. For example, in lesson one, one of the discussion questions was, "What does the resurrection mean for you personally?" The group discussions also allowed the guideline of experience to play a role as the participants' experience was leveraged to enhance their learning.¹⁰ For example, in the researcher's field notes, Greg and Sharon, the oldest participants, regularly were able to reflect on how the risen Jesus had ministered to each of them in their deepest needs. This experience was valuable not only for others but for Greg and Sharon as they connected how the resurrection of Jesus made that possible. Lastly, the surveys created a readiness to learn. Knowles notes that adults are most motivated to learn when they perceive a need to know something, so teaching should be designed to capitalize on this readiness to learn.¹¹ For example, every participant answered "I don't know," or "unsure" to at least one of the questions in their pre-study survey. This uncertainty created a readiness to learn because participants perceived a gap in their knowledge of the subject matter.

⁶ Knowles, *The Adult Learner*, 92.

⁷ John, Hattie, *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement* (London, Eng: Routledge, 2009), 156-183.

⁸ Knowles, *The Adult Learner*, 111.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 294.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 294.

Each lesson had a learning objective. The learning objective of lesson one, titled "The Importance of the Resurrection," was that by studying the resurrection in Scripture, participants would discover the importance of Jesus's resurrection. Lesson one had six points: The resurrection is the central message of the gospel (1 Cor 15); the cross is invalid without the resurrection; the Christian hope is lost without the resurrection; the Christian life cannot be lived without the resurrection; the necessity of the resurrection for the Christian faith; the Old and New Testament teaching on the resurrection. The lesson provided clear and structured instruction based on pedagogical criteria.¹² Moreover, the lesson used a combination of teaching methods. They were lectures, questioning, and case study.¹³ Lesson one had four discussion questions: What is the gospel? How does the resurrection of Jesus shape how we understand the gospel? What does the resurrection mean for you personally? How have you lost focus of the resurrection of Jesus and its importance? These discussion questions allowed the researcher to provide feedback to responses and allowed participants to use their experiences to discuss the lesson and its immediate application to their lives, as noted in Knowles's and Hattie's criteria.¹⁴

For the second lesson, titled "The Historicity of the Resurrection, Part 1," the objective was that participants commit themselves to understand the historicity of the resurrection by internalizing what was learned. The criteria for this lesson was the motivation to learn.¹⁵ The teaching method for lesson two was the lecture method. Since many of the participants did not know the historical data of the resurrection, they were able to see the benefit of learning, as noted by Knowles.¹⁶ The six points of lesson two were Jesus died by crucifixion; the tomb is empty,

¹² Hattie, *Visible Learning*, 183.

¹³ Kenneth O. Gangel, *24 Ways to Improve Your Teaching*, 21, 72, 120.

¹⁴ Knowles, *The Adult Learner*, 294-295. Hattie, *Visible Learning*, 173.

¹⁵ Knowles, *The Adult Learner*, 78.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

and Jesus was buried; the appearances of Jesus; the transformation of Jesus's disciples; the trustworthiness of the four Gospels; the evidence outside of the Bible. Lesson two had four discussion questions: What historical evidence is there for the resurrection? What are some objections to the resurrection? What are the minimal facts for the resurrection of Jesus? What piece of evidence is most compelling to you and why? These questions were based on the pedagogical criteria of Hattie, who stresses the importance of discussion to engage learners in a rich discussion.¹⁷

For the third lesson, titled "The Historicity of the Resurrection, Part 2," the objective was that participants recognize the theories against the resurrection of Jesus by identifying the popular theories raised against the resurrection. The teaching method for this lesson was the lecture method. Lesson three discussed the five most popular alternative theories to the resurrection of Jesus. They were the swoon theory, the stolen body theory, the hallucination theory, Jesus was not buried theory, and the pagan myth theory. Lesson three had the following four discussion questions: What are the doubts you have about the resurrection? Why did Jesus need to physically rise from the dead? What are some ways you can defend the resurrection? Is there any theory that makes you question the resurrection? The criteria for the discussion questions was feedback. The questions allowed the researcher to engage with specific feedback and information to enhance the participant's knowledge of the objections to the resurrection of Jesus.

The objective of the fourth lesson, "The Resurrection and Your Salvation," was that participants recognize the soteriological implications of the resurrection by studying salvation and the resurrection in Scripture. The teaching method for lesson four was the lecture method.

¹⁷ Hattie, *Visible Learning*, 156.

The content of the lesson was designed around the following five points: The resurrection of Jesus shapes how we understand salvation; the resurrection justifies you; the resurrection unites you to Christ; the cross would not have worked if Christ did not resurrect from the dead; the resurrection secures you. The fourth lesson had three discussion questions: What is salvation? How does Jesus save you, and what role does the resurrection play in that? How does the resurrection of Jesus assure your salvation? The discussion questions for lesson four provided meaningful discussion, one of Hattie's criteria, and allowed for specific feedback on each participant's responses.¹⁸

Lastly, the objective of the fifth lesson, "Jesus and His resurrection," was that participants have confidence in the Person of Jesus by remembering who He is through Scripture. The teaching method that was utilized for the lesson was the lecture method. The fifth lesson had five points: Jesus is God, Jesus is Lord, Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus's teachings are true, and Jesus is alive. The fifth lesson had four discussion questions: What does it mean that Jesus is Lord? Why is Jesus more than just an example or a good teacher? Who is Jesus? How does the resurrection of Jesus solidify His claims? The discussion questions for lesson five were designed around the criteria of discussion and application.

The recorded video lesson was sent through text and email before the gathering. The video was prerecorded and uploaded to YouTube. The videos were recorded with the researcher's camera on his phone. Then, the videos were uploaded to the researcher's computer and then uploaded to YouTube. They were set to "unlisted," so only the participants could access the video, not the public.

¹⁸ Hattie, *Visible Learning*, 156, 173.

The plan for the lesson each week was for it to last one to two hours, depending on the length of the group discussion. The researcher would leave room for the members to discuss and ask questions and for them not to feel rushed. Each week's lesson would start with prayer, a reading of Scripture, and a group discussion of the teaching, as illustrated in Figure 2. The group discussion was based on the discussion questions provided by the researcher (see Appendix G). The researcher journaled after each week's study to take notes of questions, thoughts, and responses from the members of Life Church.



Figure 2. Schedule of Each Lesson

The pre-study and post-study surveys had open-ended questions. These questions were centered around the topic of the resurrection. The same survey was administered at the beginning of the project and given after the study was completed to evaluate the change in participants' understanding of the resurrection. Charts and graphs were used to illustrate the results of the assessments and participants' individual responses (see Chapter 4). For the post-study survey, the researcher used Google forms to create the survey. Next, the researcher texted and emailed the participants the survey to complete. Once the surveys were finished from all participants, the researcher downloaded the responses to an excel sheet. For the post-study interview, the researcher scheduled a time with each participant to interview them face-to-face. During the interview, the researcher asked each question and would elaborate, if needed, on some questions.

The interview was recorded with the voice memos app on an iPhone and transcribed through the online transcription service Rev.¹⁹

Six weeks were needed to complete the project. During week one, the researcher recruited, obtained consent from participants, distributed the pre-study surveys, conducted interviews, and evaluated the surveys and interviews. The researcher also prepared and finalized the plans for implementing the curriculum for the study. The next four weeks were devoted to teaching the resurrection and its soteriological implications. The final week of the project was devoted to administering and analyzing the post-study surveys and interviews and assessing the learning outcomes of the curriculum. The timeline follows in Figure 3.

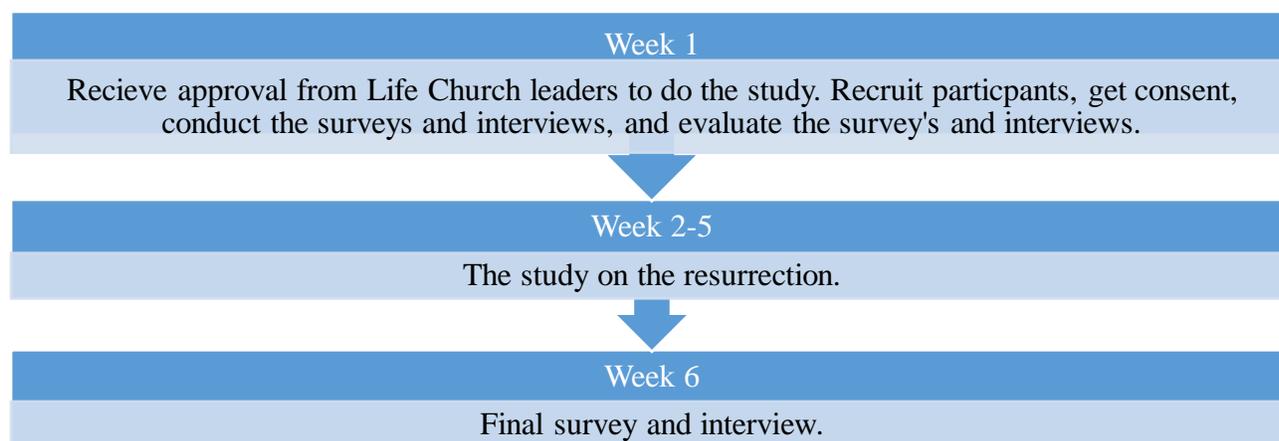


Figure 3. Timeline of the project

At the end of the course, the data from the pre and post-surveys were compared to determine the participants' level of learning. The criteria were whether participants improved in their ability to articulate their understanding of the resurrection of Jesus and its significance. The interview before and after the study was used to verify the correlation between the oral accounts

¹⁹ "Rev.com," last accessed February 18, 2023. <https://www.rev.com>.

of participants and their written responses to the resurrection of Jesus. The researcher also kept a reflective journal during the project. The researcher documented and took notes of his observations, experiences, and reflections on the study.

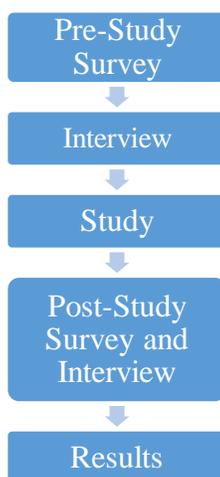


Figure 4. Methodological approach

The researcher does have a close relationship with the participants as he has known them each for several years as close friends. There are a few limitations that should be discussed. The close relationship could lead to a bias in the observations and interpretations. However, the objective nature of the project, specifically the survey, leaves little room for bias. The close relationship could also lead to a loss of anonymity. However, the participants were more willing to participate and learn since they knew and trusted the researcher. Lastly, the close relationship could lead to ethical concerns. However, the researcher implemented ethical guidelines, such as confidentiality, to ensure the project was not compromised.

As noted in Chapter 1, the researcher brings a few assumptions to the study. The first assumption is that the new study will train and educate the members in ways they have not been taught in the past. The next assumption is that if members understand the resurrection and its

implications for salvation and the Christian life, they will be anchored to truth and not be deceived by false teachings. Furthermore, this understanding would help them overcome the lies the culture is feeding them about Jesus and salvation. The third assumption is that all the members participating in this action research project are believers. The final assumption is that the problem of this action research project finds its origin in incorrect teaching.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

This action research project was implemented as described in the intervention section above. The researcher received approval from the leaders, got consent from participants, and issued the pre-study survey to each participant. The survey was sent through Google Forms, and each participant filled out each question with a short answer. The researcher then interviewed each participant. The researcher allotted thirty minutes for each interview and recorded the interviews, and transcribed them.

The researcher then began the five-lesson study on the resurrection. The study was four weeks long, with the last week having two lessons. There was a group text where the participants discussed the lessons and a group discussion of each lesson each Sunday following the first week's lesson and on three other occasions during the four weeks to discuss the lesson and their questions.

The data from the pre and post-study survey were analyzed. These findings were reported, and then the findings of this analysis were verified by triangulating them with the literature.²⁰ The surveys, field notes, and interviews were analyzed to determine the participants' growth levels. The surveys and interviews were analyzed to see the growth in the participants

²⁰ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 74.

before and after the study was implemented, as well as how their responses compared to the relevant literature in the literature review. In addition, the interviews were analyzed as a whole. Sensing says, "Analyzing an interview in its entirety involves examining the overall structure of the interview, which includes the opening statement, the transitions from one topic to another, and the closing statements."²¹ Further, the surveys were analyzed to ensure they were complete and to determine how one participant compared to the others. As Sensing notes, "Comparing and contrasting different groups of survey respondents can help you to identify similarities and differences in their responses and to gain a better understanding of the research question."²² In addition, the surveys and interviews were compared to see how their initial responses differed from their final responses, both verbally and written, and to identify emerging themes. Sensing says, "Look for patterns and themes that emerge from the data, such as common responses to certain questions or differences in responses based on demographic variables."²³ Moreover, the researcher compared the averages from the pre and post-study survey to determine how the study influenced their responses. The field notes were analyzed to see how the participants interacted during discussions, their growth during the study, and how their thoughts compared to relevant literature. Pseudonyms were used for each participant that was consistent with the participant's demographics.

The questions of the pre and post-study surveys were graded on a scale from one to four, and then the survey as a whole was the average of all the answers. One being no answer or wrong, two being fair with some elements of a correct answer, three being quality with a good explanation, and four being excellent with examples from the study, as illustrated in Figure 5.

²¹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 98.

²² *Ibid.*, 118.

²³ *Ibid.*, 116.

1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No answer or wrong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some elements of a correct answer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good explanation with a majority of the elements of a full and complete response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent and detailed response with examples from the study.

Figure 5. Grading Rubric

The way to understand how the scoring system works is to use the actual answers and the corresponding score to understand what qualifies as a one, two, three, or four. An example from question one is, "What are some facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?" On the pre-survey, Patricia answered, "I don't know." This was given a score of one. In the post-survey, on the same question, Sharon answered, "Jesus' death by crucifixion. Disciples had experiences with the risen Jesus. The gospels were written quickly after. The disciples were transformed and willing to die for the resurrection message. James and Paul, two unbelievers, became believers because of experiences they had with the risen Jesus." This was given a score of four because of the examples from the study.

In his pre-study survey, Greg explained that the "facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus" were "The four gospels." This was given a score of two because it had some elements of a correct answer. Jayton, in his post-study survey, responded to the question, "What are some facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?" by stating, "Roman and Jewish historians discuss the person of Jesus being born, living, and dying. They discuss darkness and weird happenings when he died. The fact that the disciples died for their

beliefs shows how they were convinced something extraordinary took place. His doubters, like his brother James, were converted after they saw Jesus come back to life.” This was given a score of three because of the quality of the answer.

Each survey question was based on the researchers' answers in the literature review. The core element in analyzing and grading each question is how the answers compare to the literature. Thus, the criteria for determining levels two to four was based on how similar the participant's answer was to the relevant literature.

The first question of the pre and post-study survey was, "What are some facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?" Generally, scholars refer to the minimal facts when explaining the historicity of the resurrection. Gary Habermas writes:

In recent years, the six minimal facts that are generally used are (1) Jesus' death by crucifixion, followed by (2) the disciples had experiences that, they concluded, were appearances of the risen Jesus. (3) These data from the Gospels began to be taught exceptionally early, sometime between the initial year of the crucifixion itself and the next year or two. (4) The disciples were transformed by these events, even to the point of being willing to die for the resurrection message. Lastly, two former unbelievers, (5) James, the brother of Jesus, and (6) the church persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, both became believers because they concluded that they, too, had witnessed the appearances of the risen Jesus.²⁴

A level two response would refer to one of these minimal facts. A level three response would list two to three of these facts, and a level four response would list four or more.

The second question of the pre and post-study survey was, "What evidence is there outside of the Bible for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?" Licona and Beck share that at least four non-biblical sources record the crucifixion of Jesus.²⁵ Turek and Geisler say, "Just how many non-Christian sources are there that mention Jesus? Including Josephus, there are ten

²⁴ Habermas, *Risen Indeed*, 22-23.

²⁵ David W. Beck, and Michael R. Licona, *Raised on the Third Day: Defending the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 84.

known non-Christian writers who mention Jesus within 150 years of his life.”²⁶ The ten non-Christian sources are Josephus, Tacitus (the Roman historian), Pliny the Younger (a Roman politician), Phlegon (a freed slave), Thallus (a first-century historian), Seutonius (a Roman historian), Lucian (a Greek satirist), Celsus (a Roman philosopher), Mara Bar-Serapion (a private citizen who wrote to his son), and the Jewish Talmud.²⁷ A level two response would refer to one of the sources or generally state that there are extra-biblical sources that mention Jesus. A level three response would list two to three sources, and a level four response would list four or more sources.

The third question of the pre and post-study survey was, "Why is the resurrection of Jesus the most important aspect of the Christian faith?" William Lane Craig shares, "The Christian faith stands or falls on the event of the resurrection."²⁸ Douglas Moo says, "To deny Christ's resurrection would be to evacuate Christian faith of any meaning."²⁹ Wright and Bird say, "Jesus' resurrection is the cornerstone of the Christian hope."³⁰ A level two response would suggest that the resurrection is important but not elaborate on why. A level three response would have a response with themes similar to the literature. A level four response would either quote from the literature review or have an answer that was closely connected to the answers given by the scholars.

²⁶ Turek and Geisler, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*, 221.

²⁷ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 381-385.

²⁸ Craig, *The Son Rises*, 7.

²⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *A Theology of Paul and His Letters: The Gift of the New Realm in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 154.

³⁰ Wright and Bird, *The New Testament*, 306.

The fourth pre and post-study survey question was, "What is salvation?" Millard Erickson writes, "Salvation is the application of the work of Christ to the lives of humans."³¹ Matthew Barrett adds, "In its broadest sense, salvation refers to being rescued from danger. More specifically, in Scripture salvation refers to being 'rescued' from the wrath of God, sin, and the devil."³² Michael Bird says that forgiveness, redemption, rescue, reconciliation, justification, peace, adoption, eternal life, and theosis are all concepts that help to explain salvation.³³ Marcus Johnson says, "To be saved is to be united to the Savior."³⁴ A level two response would include partial elements of what salvation is. A level three response would have a response with themes similar to the literature, such as union with Christ, being saved from sin, or being forgiven, redeemed, and given eternal life. A level four response would either quote from the literature or have an answer similar to the answers given by the scholars.

The fifth question of the pre and post-study survey was, "How does the resurrection of Jesus secure one's salvation?" Gary Habermas says, "Almost incomprehensibly, Jesus's resurrection guarantees that the believer's heavenly inheritance "is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven" for us (1 Pt 1:3-4, RSV)."³⁵ Michael Bird says a believer's salvation "remains dependent on the continuing life of Christ."³⁶ Thomas Schreiner says that Jesus "is able to save his people fully and perfectly. There is nothing lacking or incomplete in his saving work. ... Jesus always lives to intercede for his people. This is the basis for the assurance of salvation

³¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 422.

³² Matthew Barrett, *40 Questions About Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2018), 48.

³³ Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 548 – 579.

³⁴ Marcus P. Johnson, *One With Christ: An Evangelical Theology of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 29.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.

³⁶ Michael Bird, *Romans, The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 166.

that the author has been exhorting his readers to hold fast to.”³⁷ A level two response would include partial elements of how the resurrection of Jesus secures one's salvation. A level three response would have a response with themes similar to the literature, such as the resurrected Christ interceding or His life. A level four response would either quote from the literature or have an answer similar to the answers given by the scholars.

The fifth statement of the pre and post-study survey was, "Explain why the cross alone is not sufficient to save." Hastings writes the resurrection is "the climax and seal of the saving work of Jesus. In fact, the atonement is not complete without the resurrection."³⁸ Albert Mohler says that “the cross and the resurrection represent a unified saving action (Rom. 4:24–25).”³⁹ Michael Bird says, “Forgiveness and justification are not simply the results of Christ's death, they are also based on the resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:17).”⁴⁰ A level two response would include partial elements on how the resurrection and the cross are essential to the work of Christ to save. A level three response would have a response with themes similar to the literature, such as the resurrection as a seal and the work of the cross. A level four response would either quote from the literature or have an answer similar to the answers given by the scholars.

The final question of the pre and post-study survey was, "What are some objections to the resurrection of Jesus?" The objections discussed in the literature review, and the study were the hallucination theory, the swoon theory, the theory that Jesus's resurrection was a myth, the stolen body theory, and the Jesus was not buried theory. A level two response would refer to one of

³⁷ Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 234.

³⁸ Hastings, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 17.

³⁹ Mohler, *The Apostles' Creed*, 97.

⁴⁰ Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 443.

these theories. A level three response would list two to three of these theories, and a level four response would have four or more of these theories listed in their response.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The goal of this action research project was for members of Life Church to understand, defend, and articulate the resurrection of Jesus and its soteriological implications. This goal was pursued by implementing a five-lesson study on the resurrection of Jesus and how the resurrection is an integral part of the gospel message for the salvation of all who believe. Before and after the study, a survey and interview were done to gauge the participant's understanding of the resurrection.

In this chapter, the researcher will describe each of the five-learning events for the study. Next, the researcher will discuss the scores of the surveys before and after the study and compare the results. From there, the researcher will report the interview results before and after the study to show their growth. Lastly, each participant's results will be reported to determine if the goal of this project was met. As noted in Chapter 3, the planned number of participants ranged from six to twenty participants. There was a total of seven participants who completed this study.

Description of the Study

The study was implemented as described in the intervention section. All participants mentioned that the video lessons were beneficial because they could watch at their own pace, pause the video to take notes, rewind when wanting to listen, or watch again to grasp all that was said. Moreover, during each week, discussions were happening in the group texts, enriching the in-person group discussions.

The study each week started with prayer and a reading of Scripture and was followed by a group discussion of the lesson. In week one, following the prayer, the researcher read 1 Corinthians 15:1-9 and began discussing lesson one's discussion questions. The reason for reading Scripture is that, as Walter Brueggemann says, "The practice of public reading of Scripture is a central act of Christian worship."¹ There were seven participants in week one's lesson. The researcher started with the first discussion question and let the participants answer. The researcher noted in his field notes that the discussion began immediately. Following the first question, Patricia asked a follow-up question related to the study. She asked, "Why do you think the resurrection is so neglected?" Each discussion question often led to more questions the participants would ask the researcher. Often, these questions were for clarity on the teaching material. For example, Greg asked, "How does the resurrected life of Christ help us live the Christian life?" The interactions and responses indicated that the participants understood the lesson.

In week two, following the prayer, the researcher read John 20:30-31 and began discussing lesson two's discussion questions. There were seven participants in week two's lesson. As with week one, the researcher started with the first discussion question and let the participants answer. The researcher reflected in his field notes that the participants seemed more eager and comfortable to share more in their responses. One of the first questions asked of the researcher was from Morgan, who said, "What books can I read that speak of the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?" The discussion and the entire group's desire to dig deeper into relevant literature revealed their desire to understand the importance of the resurrection's historicity.

¹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 89.

In week three, following the prayer, the researcher read Job 19:25, and then Sharon started the discussion with a question. She asked, "Of all the theories you discussed, which one is most worrisome to you?" This researcher noted in his field notes that the participants were still engaged and eager to learn more. There were seven participants in week three's lesson. After the researcher's response, he started the discussion questions. As with the first two lessons, each discussion question led to more questions the participants would ask the researcher about the lesson. By this point in the study, it seemed clear that the participant's ability to articulate the historicity of the resurrection was growing.

In the final week, the researcher met twice with the group to review lessons four and five. In the first gathering, following the prayer, the researcher read Romans 4:24-25 and began discussing lesson four's discussion questions. The researcher observed that this lesson was the longest of all lessons. There were seven participants in week four's lesson. The reason for this, as noted in the researcher's field notes, is that this lesson was the most personal because it dealt with salvation. Moreover, the researcher observed that this lesson was the climax of the study because it gave meaning to why understanding the historicity of the resurrection is so important to other areas of doctrine. As Jayton noted in the discussion, "Not only does understanding the historicity of the resurrection help me to defend my faith, but it also assures me in my own doubts about my salvation."

In the second gathering, following the prayer, the researcher read 1 Peter 1:3 and began discussing lesson five's discussion questions. There were seven participants in week two's lesson. Jeff said, "I thought the video for lesson five was odd until I watched it a second time and realized how it complimented the entire study." The researcher noted in his field notes that the participants had never thought about how the resurrection of Jesus affirms who He is as God and

Messiah. Allie said, "I see now how the resurrection of Jesus means that I need to go and study Jesus's words and realize that He is God and more than just a teacher."

Report of Each Participant

This section presents the findings from each participant's pre and post-study surveys. Further, the pre and post-study surveys will be discussed and complimented by a report on the analysis of the researcher's field notes and the interviews that took place before and after the study. Claims will be backed with direct quotes from both the written surveys and the interviews to provide context for each participant and evidence of his or her growth. The thesis of this project was that if members of Life Church went through a focused Bible study on the resurrection, then they would understand what Scripture teaches about salvation.

Patricia

Patricia improved by 1.57 points on her average score from their pre and post-study surveys, as illustrated in Figure 5. She had a 2.28 in her pre-study and a 3.85 in her post-study survey. She had the highest score of all the participants in the post-study survey. In the pre-study survey, Patricia answered, "I don't know," on questions one and seven and received a one for those responses. In contrast, she received a four on both questions in the post-study survey.

For example, in question one, "What are some facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?" Patricia was able to provide five minimal facts and note that over ten sources outside of the Bible speak of the life and death of Jesus. When asked, "What are some alternative theories to the resurrection of Jesus?" Patricia cited the swoon theory, the stolen body theory, the hallucination theory, the body was not buried theory, and the pagan myth theory in

her response, reflecting her understanding of the content from the lesson on the "Historicity of the Resurrection, Part 2."

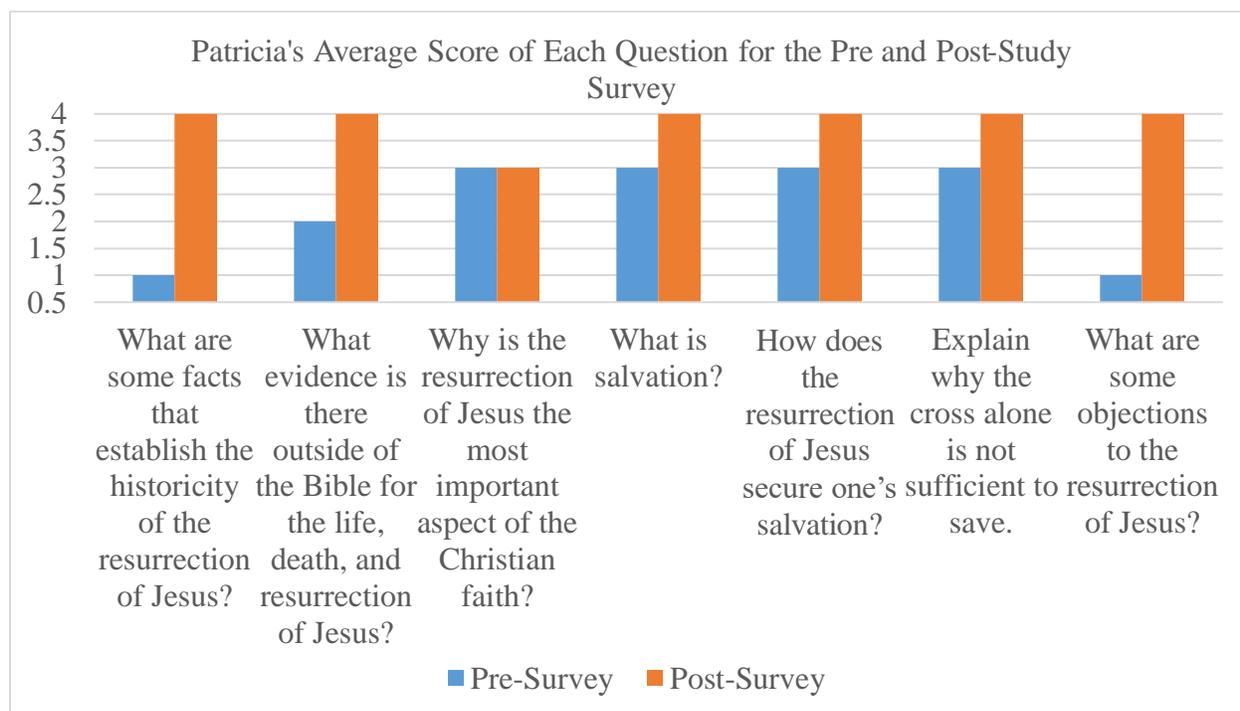


Figure 6. Patricia's Average Score of Each Question for the Pre and Post-Study Survey

Patricia seemed most eager to learn based on her mannerisms and excitement for the next lesson. The study so moved Patricia that she wrote a song on the resurrection called, "Resurrected." In particular, one verse in the song captures her knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus and its implications. In it, she writes, "Jesus, you are our source, we're unified, you've given us life, you're alive for all time."

The pre-study survey and interview revealed that Patricia did not know much about the historicity of the resurrection and its soteriological implications. As noted above, she answered "I don't know" to two of the questions as well as "I'm not sure" to the questions, "What is so important about Jesus' bodily resurrection?" and "What evidence is there for the resurrection?"

However, after the study, Patricia could articulate her beliefs both orally in their interviews and written with high excellence.

The researcher noted in his field notes a definitive change in Patricia's knowledge of the resurrection and her understanding of salvation. In particular, she could articulate how the resurrection of Jesus saves and secures her salvation. She said in her post-study interview, "Because of Jesus's resurrection, He is not dead; He is alive. For as long as He is alive, we are saved as Hebrews [*sic*] 7:25 says. As believers, we look to the historicity of the event of the resurrection of Jesus, and if we choose to believe it happened, we are saved forever because He is alive."² In her pre-study interview, she said she "did not know" to the same question. Moreover, in the post-study interview, she could articulate that "if Christ had not risen, Christianity would not exist. It would be futile, as 1 Corinthians 15 says." Thus, Patricia understands the resurrection and its soteriological implications and displays the ability to articulate and defend the resurrection.

Sharon

Sharon grew significantly because of the study based on her pre- to post-study survey score. Her pre-study survey score was 2.42, and her post-study survey was 3.71, as illustrated in Figure 6. For example, in response to the first question, "What are some facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?" she provided general historical evidence for the resurrection. However, in the post-study survey, she could cite the four minimal facts agreed on among scholars as cited in the study. Moreover, in her interview, when asked, "What evidence is there for the resurrection?" she was also able to recall these minimal facts by saying, "Jesus died by crucifixion, the disciples had experiences with the risen Jesus, the resurrection was taught

² Patricia, interviewed by Zach Maldonado, Lubbock, Texas, January 25, 2023.

soon after the event of the crucifixion, the disciples were transformed and were even willing to die, and James and Paul both became believers because of their witness of the resurrected Jesus.”

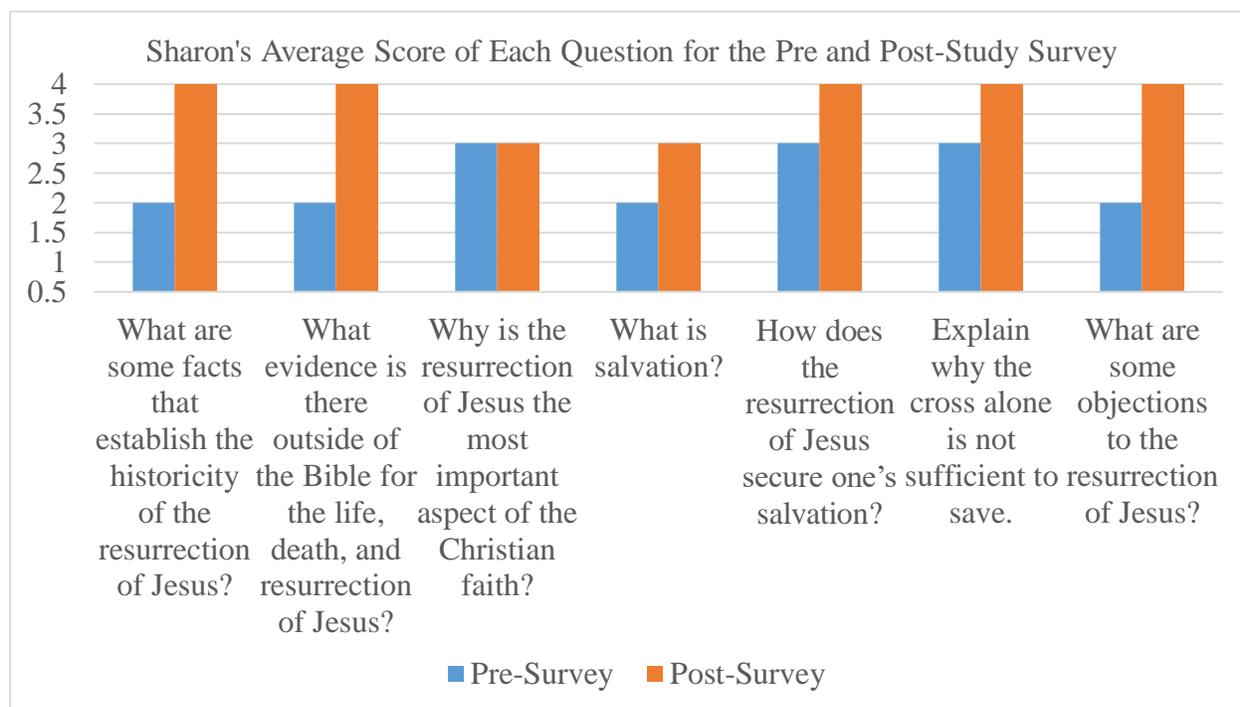


Figure 7. Sharon's Average Score of Each Question for the Pre and Post-Study Survey

Sharon participated heavily in the group texts and in-person discussions. For example, she often would ask other participants their thoughts on the video or discussion time. The researcher noted in his field notes that she was one to always continue the conversation and ask deeper questions beyond the study. The first interview made it clear that Sharon had a working knowledge of the subject matter. For example, when asked about the historicity of the resurrection, she said, "I know there are facts that are agreed upon by scholars; I just don't know what they are." However, she was not confident in her responses. Nonetheless, Sharon was very confident in the final interview and her responses, as noted above.

Sharon understood the importance of the resurrection and what Scripture teaches about salvation, as evidenced by her post-study survey and interview responses. In her interview, she recognized that if the resurrection were false, "Christianity would fall apart and would be nothing."³ In her pre-study interview, she said Christianity would still be around but more like other religions. Moreover, she recognized and said in her post-study survey that salvation is "being united with the Risen Lord, rescued from wrath, forgiven of sin, and given eternal life." In contrast, her pre-study survey simply mentioned being saved from sin and death. Further, her responses indicated her ability to defend and articulate the resurrection of Jesus and its soteriological implications.

Morgan

Morgan had the most growth compared with the other participants from her pre and post-study surveys, with a 1.72 growth. She scored a 1.85 in her pre-study survey and a 3.57 in her post-study survey, as illustrated in Figure 8. Morgan's detail in her articulation in both her post-study survey and post-study interview revealed her growth.

For example, when asked, "What are some facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?" she answered, "I don't know." In comparison, on the same question in her post-study survey, she cited five of the minimal facts: Jesus's death by crucifixion, the disciple's experiences with the risen Jesus, the transformation of the disciples and their willingness to die, and Paul and James' salvation. When asked about "alternative theories to the resurrection of Jesus" during the pre-study survey, Morgan only provided the swoon theory as an answer. However, in her post-study survey, she could cite three of the theories: the swoon theory, the pagan myth theory, and the hallucination theory.

³ Sharon, interviewed by Zach Maldonado, Lubbock, Texas, January 26, 2023.

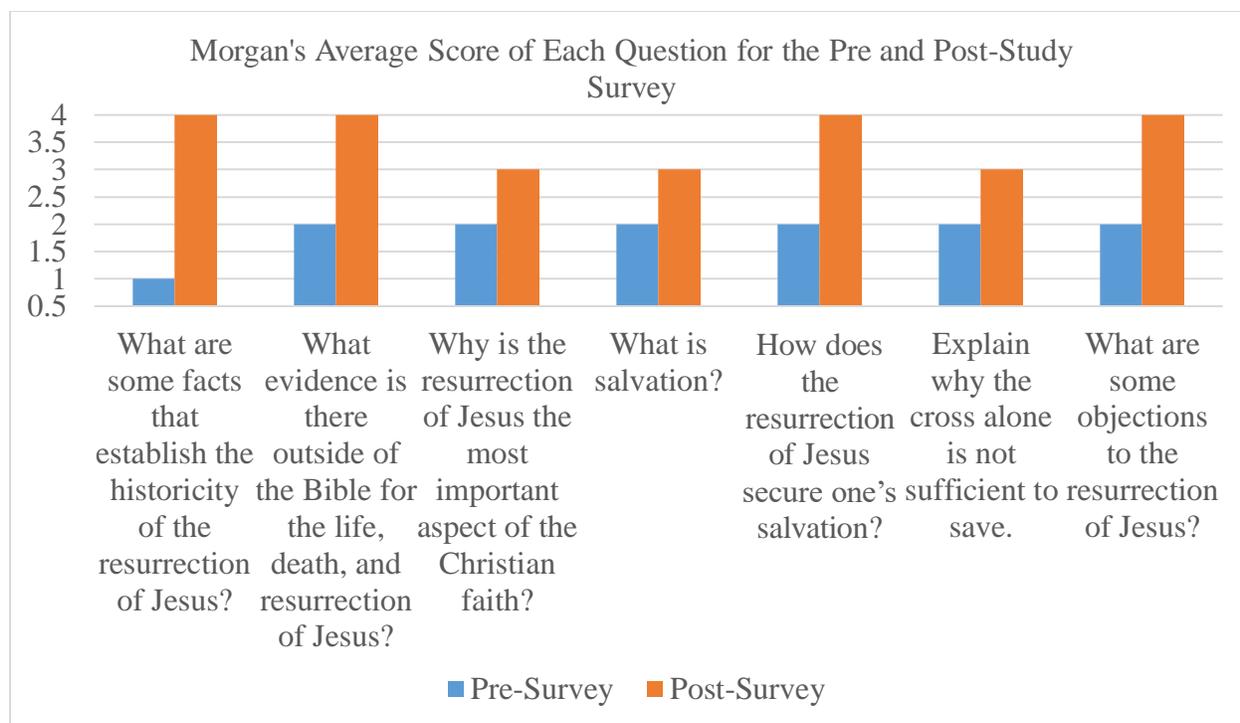


Figure 8. Morgan's Average Score of Each Question for the Pre and Post-Study Survey

The researcher noted in his field notes that Morgan was timid in her interactions during the chat and group discussions. Nonetheless, she took a lot of notes and was very attentive. There was a noticeable difference in her confidence in the post-study interview compared to her pre-study interview. For example, in her pre-study interview, she would often start her answer with, "I'm not sure," before providing a short response. In the post-study interview, she was more relaxed and sure of her responses. For example, when asked, "What would be the impact on the validity of Christianity if the resurrection of Jesus was proven false?" she quoted William Lane Craig verbatim saying, "The Christian faith stands or falls on the event of the resurrection."

As noted earlier, Morgan's written and oral responses were incredibly detailed. For example, in her pre-study survey, she explained that salvation occurs "once you ask Jesus into your heart, this secures His place there." In her post-study survey, she elaborated further on this topic with a citation from the study. She said, "He will never die again, so I will never die again

since I'm united with Him. We're saved as long as Jesus lives. And 'A believer will never have to pay for their sins again.' (Tim Keller)." Moreover, in Morgan's post-study interview, she could recall the minimal facts and articulate why the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of Christianity.⁴ She said, "Without the resurrection, Christianity would have no meaning and I would have no salvation or hope of heaven."⁵ Thus, Morgan understands the historicity of the resurrection and its soteriological implications.

Jeff

Jeff had the lowest score on the pre-study survey in comparison with the other participants. Yet, he had significant growth in his post-study survey. He scored a 1.57 on his pre-study survey and a 2.71 on his post-study survey, as illustrated in Figure 9. Three of his answers in the pre-study survey were "I don't know or not sure." Furthermore, in the pre-study survey, all of his answers were only one sentence each. However, in Jeff's post-study survey, he answered each question with multiple sentences and even cited from the study in the majority of his responses.

For example, on the survey question, "What are some objections to the resurrection of Jesus?" he responded, "I don't know." However, in the post-study survey, he provided three of the six alternative theories to the resurrection discussed in the study: the swoon theory, the stolen body theory, and the hallucination theory. Moreover, when asked, "What evidence is there outside of the Bible for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?" in his pre-study survey, he answered, "Not sure." Yet, in this post-study survey, he said, "There are many different Roman and Jewish historian sources that mention Jesus and what he did."

⁴ Morgan interviewed by Zach Maldonado, Lubbock, Texas, January 28, 2023.

⁵ Ibid.

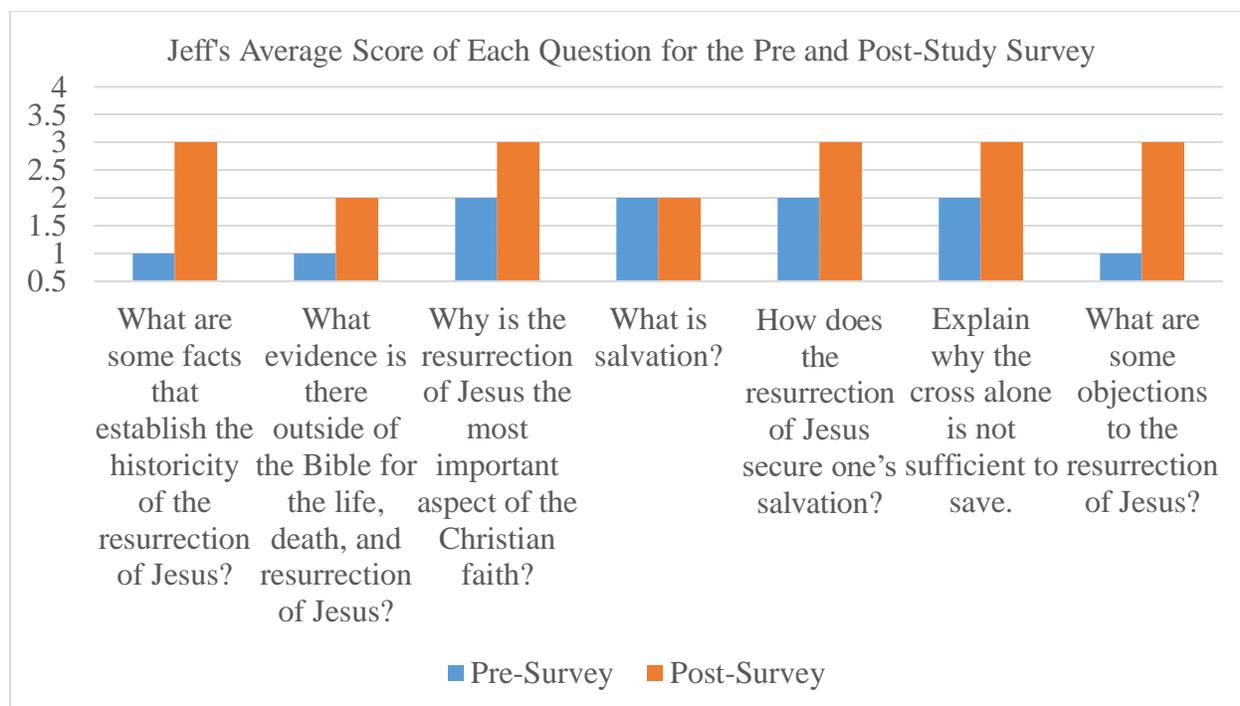


Figure 9. Jeff's Average Score of Each Question for the Pre and Post-Study Survey

The researcher observed and wrote in his field notes that Jeff did not participate in the group text discussions but often asked thoughtful questions during the group discussions. Moreover, Jeff would also ask the researcher questions after the meeting. While Jeff was not very thorough in his post-study interview, his post-study survey responses were much more thorough.

On the survey question, "What is salvation?" Jeff answered, "Living eternally with Jesus," in his pre-study response. In comparison, in his post-study interview, he said, "Salvation is to be eternally joined with Christ because He not only gave Himself for us at the cross but also because he rose again and lives forever."⁶ Furthermore, Jeff cited three of the minimal facts in his post-study survey on question one and put "I don't know" in the pre-study survey. Moreover, Jeff recognized in his interview that if Christ had not risen, he "would not believe in Christianity

⁶ Jeff, interviewed by Zach Maldonado, Lubbock, Texas, January 28, 2023.

because without the resurrection there would be nothing to believe in.”⁷ In sum, Jeff showed that he understood the resurrection and how it applies to salvation and could articulate and defend the resurrection of Jesus.

Jayton

Jayton scored a 1.71 in his pre-study survey and a three in his post-study survey, as illustrated in Figure 10. In his pre-study survey, he was unsure or answered "don't know" when asked, "What are some facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?" and "What evidence is there outside of the Bible for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?" Jayton, based on his pre-study survey, had some knowledge of the subject matter. For example, he cited the swoon theory and the pagan myth theory when asked, "What are some objections to the resurrection of Jesus?" His knowledge drastically increased, as evidenced by his post-study survey responses and his post-study interview answers. For example, he could not answer questions one and two in his pre-study survey. However, in his post-study survey, he answered question one, "What are some facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?" by citing three of the minimal facts. On question two, "What evidence is there outside of the Bible for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?" he cited extra-biblical sources such as Josephus, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger as evidence for the life and death of Jesus.

⁷ Jeff, interviewed by Zach Maldonado, Lubbock, Texas, January 28, 2023.

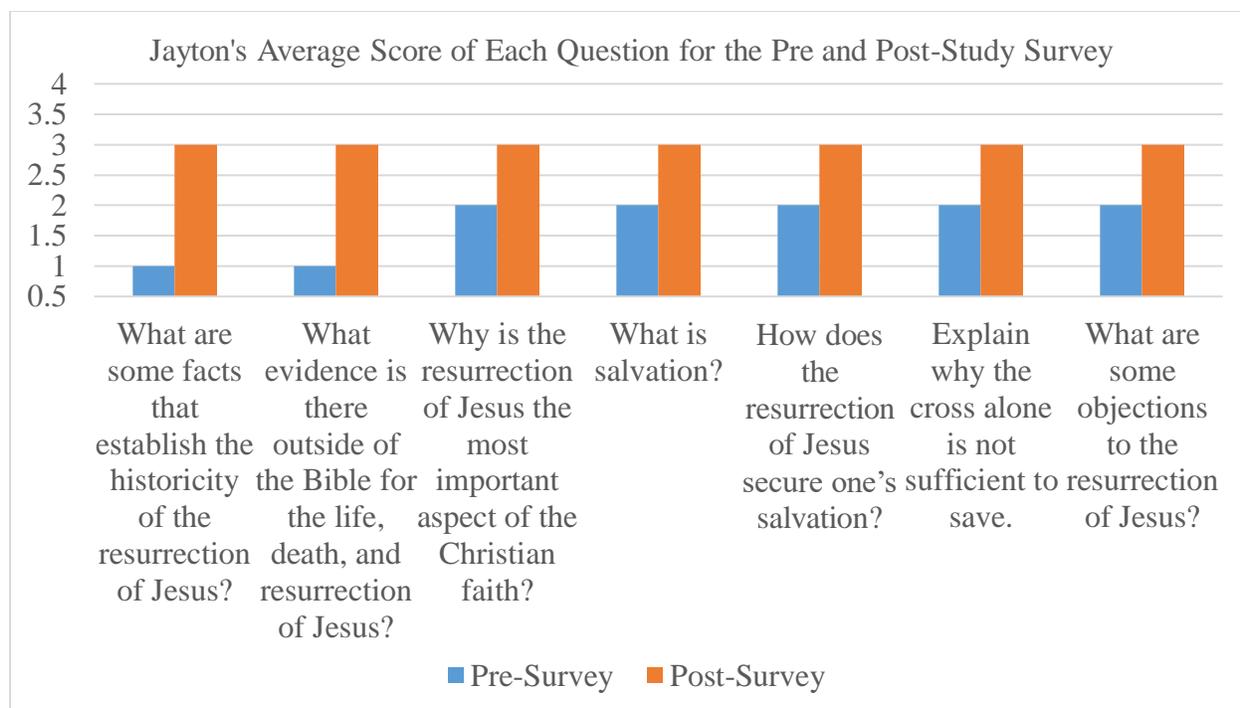


Figure 10. Jayton's Average Score of Each Question for the Pre and Post-Study Survey

The researcher wrote in his field journal that Jayton was heavily involved during the study time, as evidenced by his frequent questions throughout the discussions. Jayton also met with other friends outside the group to discuss what was being taught. Moreover, Jayton requested more information and resources to dive deeper into the subject matter. In his pre-study interview, Jayton had vague answers regarding the resurrection. For example, when asked, "What is so important about Jesus' bodily resurrection?" he said, "I have never really thought about that before." However, in his post-study interview, his responses were much more detailed and thoughtful. For example, his response to the same question was, "Jesus's bodily resurrection assures that He was fully God and fully man and not just a spirit. His body affirms that he actually died and rose again."⁸

⁸ Jayton, interviewed by Zach Maldonado, Lubbock, Texas, January 28, 2023.

In Jayton's pre-study survey, when asked, "What are some objections to the resurrection of Jesus?" he said, "Jesus never actually died." In comparison, in his post-study survey, he said, "The common objections are that Jesus did not actually die, as you discussed, the swoon theory. That Jesus' body was stolen by the disciples. That the disciples and eyewitnesses hallucinated. And that Jesus was never really buried." Moreover, in his post-study interview, he could cite four of the minimal facts: Jesus's crucifixion, Paul and James' new belief in Jesus, and the transformation of the disciples. In addition, he recognized that Jesus's resurrection is what makes Christianity what it is. In his post-study interview, he stated, "I would not be a Christian if Jesus did not rise again. His resurrection is what Christianity is founded on. It is the basis of my salvation and the entire Christian faith." Jayton, as shown, understands the resurrection and its soteriological implications and knows how to articulate and defend the resurrection.

Allie

Allie had the lowest post-study survey among participants, with a score of 2.42. Her pre-study survey score was 1.71, as illustrated in Figure 11. While there was growth between surveys, Allie, of all participants, seemed to be the least interested in the study. Her answers in the post-study survey were very short and not detailed as the others. For example, when asked, "What are some facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?" she said, "The Bible." Moreover, in her post-study interview, she seemed to lack confidence as the other participants had. For example, when asked, "What evidence is there for the resurrection?" she said, "I cannot really recall the evidence, but I know there are minimal facts by Gary Habermas."⁹

⁹ Allie, interviewed by Zach Maldonado, Lubbock, Texas, January 28, 2023.

Allie answered “unsure” or “I don’t know” to “What are some facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?” and “Explain why the cross alone is not sufficient to save.” However, in her post-study survey, she was able to answer those same questions with some elements of a correct answer. For example, when asked to “Explain why the cross alone is not sufficient to save,” in her post-study survey, she answered, “Without the resurrection, the cross would have no effect. The resurrection of Jesus is what makes the cross work.”

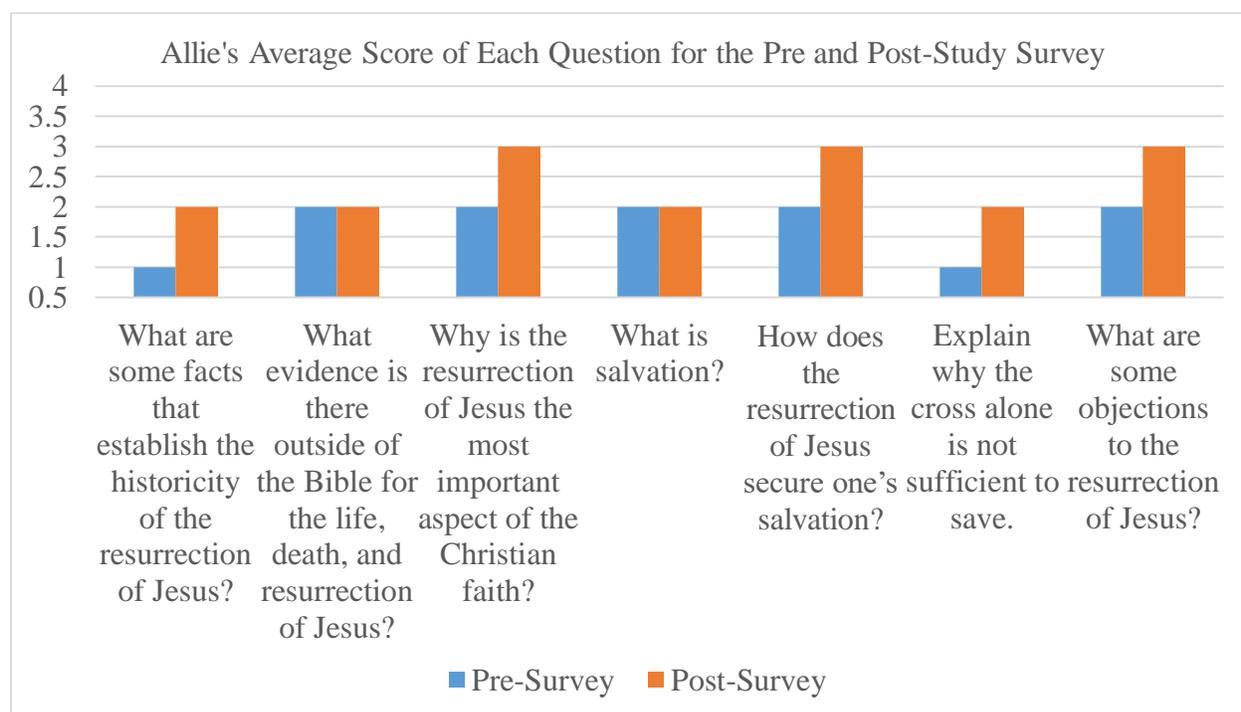


Figure 11. Allie's Average Score of Each Question for the Pre and Post-Study Survey

Allie was not very engaged in the group text or discussion. However, the researcher wrote in his field notes that the questions she did ask were always extremely thoughtful. In her pre-study interview, she could not articulate many of her responses. Moreover, she could not fully articulate the impact the resurrection had on her faith and Christianity. However, in her post-study interview, she understood the importance of the resurrection to Christianity and her

own salvation. For example, she said in her interview that "without the resurrection, I would not have eternal life."¹⁰

In her pre-study survey, she did not score above a two on any of her answers. However, in her post-study survey, she scored a three on three of the questions. Allie understands salvation and the importance of the resurrection. However, it seems that she was still unable to articulate and defend the resurrection of Jesus, as evidenced in her response when asked, "What are some facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?" On this, she cited Jesus's death by crucifixion, James and Paul's transformation after witnessing the risen Jesus, and the transformation of the disciples and their willingness to die.

Greg

Greg had the least growth of all the participants from the pre-study survey to the post-study survey with an improvement of .58. His pre-study survey scored 2.14, and his post-study survey was 2.71, as illustrated in Figure 12. The reason for this, it seems, is although he retained knowledge of the study, he was not specific in his answers. For example, when asked, "What are some facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?" Greg cited the reliability of the four gospels as historical evidence for the resurrection. In comparison, in his post-study survey, he said, "The Old Testament prophecies that Jesus would die and resurrect and then the testimony of the four Gospels. Then many historians and writings have verified the belief that Jesus came back to life." While there is evidence of truth, he did not go into specific details about the various historical facts that establish the resurrection.

¹⁰ Allie, interviewed by Zach Maldonado, Lubbock, Texas, January 28, 2023.

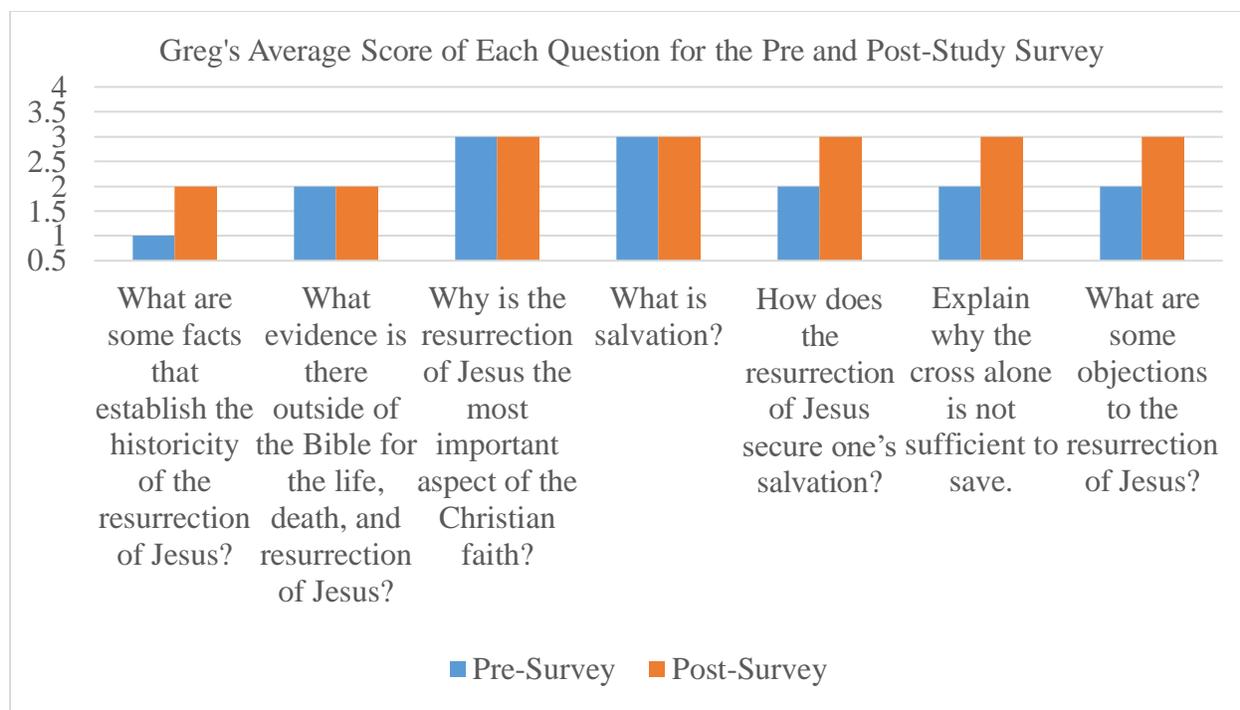


Figure 12. Greg's Average Score of Each Question for the Pre and Post-Study Survey

Greg was well-spoken in his theology and understanding of Jesus. The researcher wrote in his field notes that Greg often had deep insights into what the resurrection meant for them practically. In his pre-study interview, he was more interested in the theology of the topic and less interested in the historicity of the resurrection. For example, he would often ask the researcher questions in the interview that were related to the resurrection in order to discuss the theological meaning. Nonetheless, in his post-study interview, he exhibited a deeper appreciation and awareness of the importance of the resurrection's historicity. Greg said, "I never needed to know if Jesus was real or not but I see now the benefit of knowing I don't believe in something that is not backed by history."¹¹

While Greg had the least growth of all participants, he walked away understanding the importance of the resurrection of Jesus to the Christian faith. In his post-study survey, he said, "If

¹¹ Greg, interviewed by Zach Maldonado, Lubbock, Texas, January 28, 2023.

the resurrection was proven false, there is nothing to Christianity, and there would be nothing to believe." Furthermore, he could articulate that he would not be saved without the resurrection. Greg said in his post-study survey, "Without the resurrection, the cross would mean nothing. The resurrection is what puts us in union with Jesus, and I believe it is Romans 5 that teaches we are saved by His life." Lastly, Greg exhibited the ability to defend the resurrection in simple terms though he lacks the depth of other participants.

Pre and Post-Study Survey Scores

The questions of the pre and post-study surveys were graded on a scale from one to four, and then the score for the survey was the average of all the answers to the questions. The criteria for each question was a score of one being no answer or wrong, a score of two being fair with some elements of a correct answer, a score of three being quality with a good explanation, and a score of four being excellent with examples from the study. Questions related to the historicity of the resurrection, evidence for the resurrection, the resurrection and the security of salvation, the place of the resurrection for the Christian faith, the inadequacy of the cross alone, and objections to the resurrection had an overall average of two or below in the pre-study survey. Only two questions were above two, as illustrated in Figure 13. In contrast, questions one, three, four, five, six, and seven in the post-study survey were three or above, and only question two was below three. Thus, as previously indicated, the participant's knowledge of the resurrection and its soteriological implications grew.

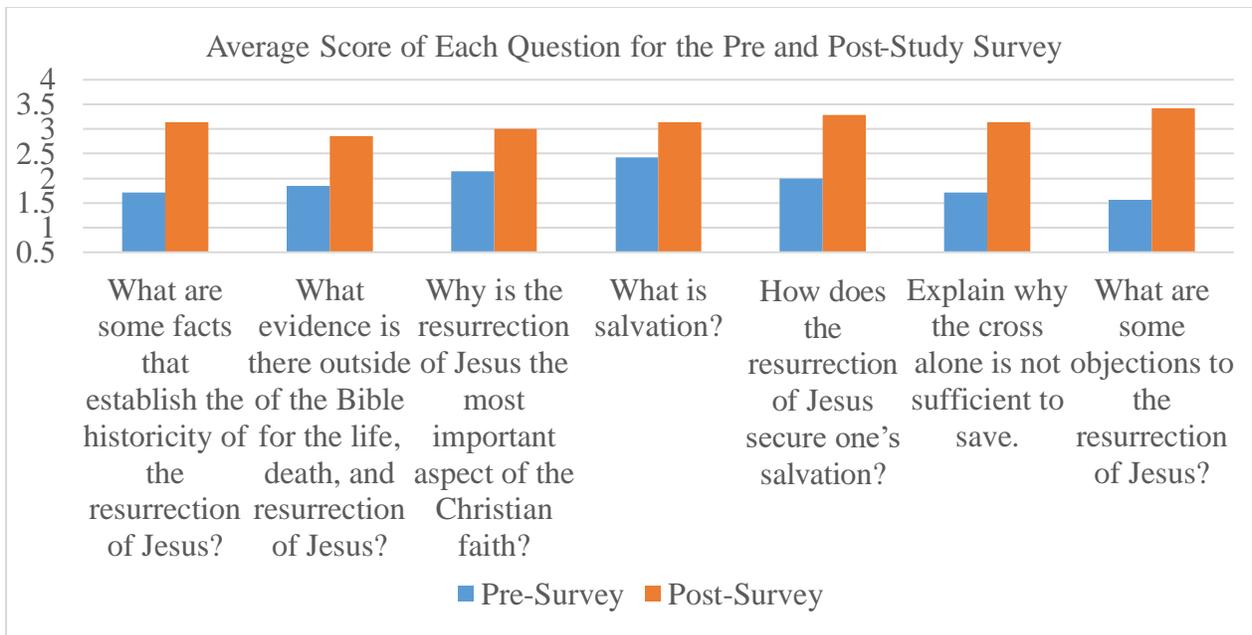


Figure 13. Average Score of Responses to Pre and Post-Study Survey Questions

The average of all participants for the pre-study survey was 1.95. The average for all participants in the post-study survey was 3.19. Every participant improved in their understanding of the resurrection and its soteriological significance, as illustrated in Figure 14. Thus, the participant's overall knowledge of the resurrection grew significantly.

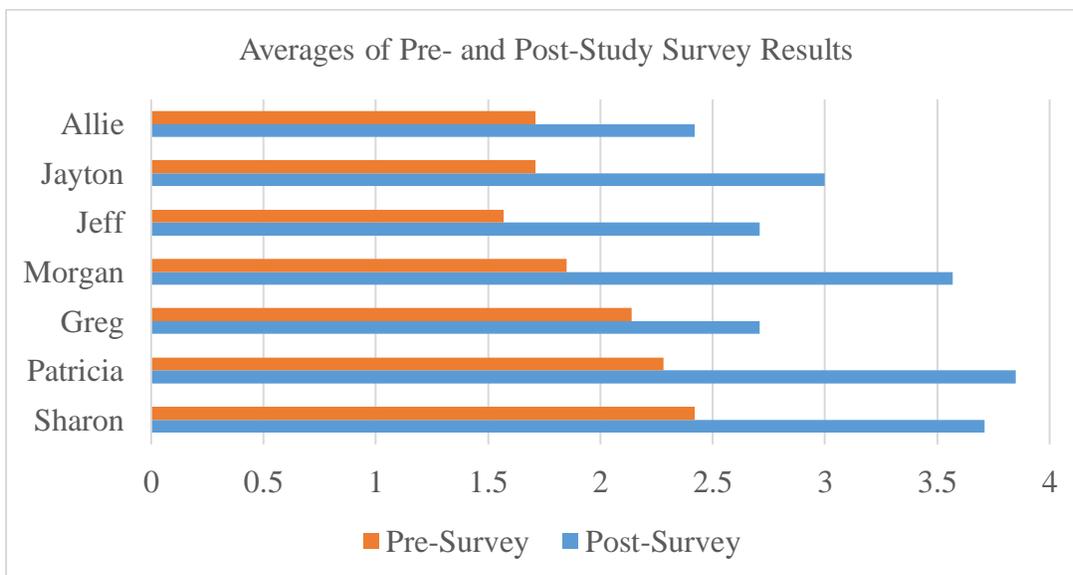


Figure 14. Averages of Pre- and Post-Survey Results

Expected and Unexpected Results

The problem that was addressed with this project was that people at Life Church did not adequately understand the importance of the belief in the resurrection of Christ for their salvation. The criteria used to evaluate if the project satisfactorily addressed the problem was if the study participants could articulate and defend the resurrection and understand salvation, the resurrection of Jesus, and how Jesus saves them. The results, as noted above, is that six of seven participants, after going through a focused Bible study on the resurrection, now understand better what Scripture teaches about salvation, the historicity of the resurrection, and how Christ saves them. Moreover, most participants understand the historicity of the resurrection and can articulate the evidence for the resurrection. In addition, they are now equipped with an understanding of the basic objections to the resurrection and how to respond to them.

Some unexpected results were discovered during this study. Firstly, Allie indicated that she still may be a Christian if Christ had not risen. Thus, implying she did not fully grasp the implications of the resurrection of Jesus. As William Lane Craig shares, “The Christian faith stands or falls on the event of the resurrection.”¹² Secondly, while not a wrong answer, Greg kept his response the same from the pre and post-study survey regarding evidence outside of the Bible for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He answered that Jesus Christ lives in him and that there have been two thousand years of life change from believers. This was enlightening for the researcher because the researcher failed to emphasize the witness of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer as evidence for the resurrected Christ. Gary Habermas says that "Christians are

¹² Craig, *The Son Rises*, 7.

justified in making the assertion that the Holy Spirit provides a witness to them that they are, indeed, God's children."¹³

There were also some expected and unexpected experiences during the lessons. The expected experience is that the majority of participants were eager to learn. As noted in the study description, one of the unexpected experiences was the questions the participants asked the researcher on the spot during the lessons themselves. The researcher grew as a teacher because it forced him to rely on the Holy Spirit and the knowledge gained through this project to provide answers. The lessons did not have to adapt. Nonetheless, the researcher should have modified them to include more group collaboration and encouraged the participants to go out and live what they learned in the next week. The researcher would have preferred to teach the lesson's in-person instead of via video. However, assigning the videos forced the researcher to be more prepared to teach and to teach the lessons in simple and concise ways.

¹³ Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 208.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this action research project was to develop and implement a study on the resurrection of Jesus at Life Church. The need for this arose from the reality that members of Life Church had not had a focused study on the resurrection of Jesus. Moreover, members of Life Church did not understand the resurrection of Jesus and its soteriological implications. This project assumed that participants wanted to be equipped with an understanding of what the resurrection is, how to defend and articulate it, and what it means for their understanding of salvation. Thus, this project's thesis was that if members of Life Church went through a focused Bible study on the resurrection, they would understand what Scripture teaches about salvation.

As discovered, the results of this project confirm the problem and that the project was satisfactory in addressing the problem. Now, with the encouraging results, the implications of this project are considered. The current chapter aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the study's outcomes by comparing them with the literature review. Additionally, the chapter highlights the researcher's insights gained through the implementation of the project, followed by an examination of the potential applicability of this research in diverse settings. Furthermore, this chapter critically assesses the limitations of the project and concludes by presenting future directions for investigating the problem under study.

Research Implications

The results bore witness to the reality that members of Life Church, prior to the study, did not fully understand or give enough attention to the resurrection of Jesus. In their pre-study

survey and interview, many participants did not mention how the resurrection was related to salvation. As was previously stated, Tim Keller wrote, "When most Christians give a 'gospel' presentation to explain how we can be saved, they talk exclusively about the cross and make the resurrection an afterthought or leave it out altogether."¹ However, the final results revealed a growth in their understanding. As the literature review pointed out, Christianity is founded on the event of the resurrection of Jesus.

The results of the study caused many of the participants to echo the words of Douglas Moo. He wrote, "To deny Christ's resurrection would be to evacuate Christian faith of any meaning."² Greg said, "If the resurrection was proven false, there is nothing to Christianity, and there would be nothing to believe." Jayton said, "I would not be a Christian if Jesus did not rise again." Thus, the study's findings revealed that when one truly understands the importance of the resurrection, one will understand its implications for every doctrine. As Mohler indicates, "Christ's resurrection establishes the theological foundation upon which the Christian finds forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death, and life everlasting."³

As noted in Chapter 2, the gap in the literature was the soteriological implications of the resurrection. The results of the pre-study survey and interview found that members of Life Church did not properly understand how Christ saved them and the role the resurrection plays in that salvation. Nonetheless, as a result of the study, members of Life Church can affirm what Gary Habermas said, "Jesus's resurrection guarantees that the believer's heavenly inheritance "is

¹ Timothy Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, xix.

² Moo, *A Theology of Paul and His Letters*, 154.

³ Mohler, *The Apostles' Creed*, 101.

imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven” for us.”⁴ For example, Jayton said, “I would not be a Christian if Jesus did not rise again.”⁵

The results also corroborated the theoretical framework on which this project was built, namely, Scripture. As noted in Chapter 2, the framework of this research action project is simply to allow Scripture to train, correct, teach, and rebuke the members of Life Church. Thus, what members of Life Church needed was more Scripture. This enabled them to renew their minds and, as a result, prepared them to defend and articulate the resurrection of Jesus. For example, the researcher wrote in his field notes a comment Patricia made in the final lesson. She said, "This study has completely changed my mind on the importance of Jesus's resurrection and has helped me to be confident in defending my faith." In addition, this transformed their thinking to see what salvation is and how the resurrection of Jesus applies to their understanding of salvation. Sharon said in her post-study interview, "I never realized how important the work of the resurrection is to my salvation."⁶ As mentioned in the results, most participants could not articulate how to defend the resurrection. However, after the study, they could articulate and defend the resurrection.

Research Takeaways

During the implementation of this project, the researcher learned the power of Scripture and apologetics afresh. It is one thing to study God's Word and get degrees to help further one's knowledge of the power of the gospel, and it is quite another thing to see others get excited about Scripture and apologetics. Moreover, it is fulfilling to witness God's work through Scripture and apologetics in the lives of others, especially when it is related to a project as consequential as this

⁴ Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 159.

⁵ Jayton, interviewed by Zach Maldonado, Lubbock, Texas, January 28, 2023.

⁶ Sharon, interviewed by Zach Maldonado, Lubbock, Texas, January 26, 2023.

one. The researcher learned that when others learn what they believe, it helps them become more confident in sharing their faith. Jayton informed the researcher that the study made him feel "way more comfortable" sharing his faith with co-workers. As JP Moreland says, "When people learn what they believe and why, they become bold in their witness and attractive in the way they engage others in debate or dialogue."⁷

The researcher also learned the power of a small group and how that environment can foster deep learning of Scripture. Moreover, the small group setting, coupled with discussions and group learning, enabled the participants to think through what they believed and were learning. For example, in lesson four, Patricia asked, "Why do you think the resurrection is so neglected?" Her question led to a rich discussion on understanding salvation and the resurrection, as noted in Chapter 4. Furthermore, it allowed them to ask questions on the spot to better understand the topic. Whereas, in a sermon, one cannot ask questions or hear other points of view, in a small group, one can. John Hattie writes that dialogic teaching has a high effect size on student achievement.⁸

The researcher also learned that one could not assume that all believers have a correct understanding of the basic doctrines of the faith. Just because one has been a believer for her entire life does not mean she fully understands the core doctrines of the faith. There were times during the study when the researcher assumed participants had a working knowledge of a particular word or subject, and they did not. For example, Allie did not know what justification was in the fourth lesson's discussion time.

Based on what the researcher learned, there are a few recommendations for ministry leaders, parents, and believers. Firstly, ministry leaders should consider focused studies on core

⁷ J.P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind*, 31.

⁸ Hattie, *Visible Learning*, 100.

doctrines of Christianity such as Scripture, God, humanity, the person of Jesus, salvation, the church, and eschatology. A few examples would be the workbook accompanying Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* book or John MacArthur's book, *Biblical Doctrine*.⁹ As seen in the results from Chapter 4, when one goes through a focused study on a particular topic, one walks away with a deeper understanding of the topic.

Moreover, all believers should seek out their pastors and leaders to receive proper instruction on these important topics. As a ministry, the researcher understands that ministry leaders can forget that believers are hungry for more of God's Word. Thus, believers should not fear initiating a study with their pastors and leaders. For a study on the resurrection in particular, the resource cited in this study is by Frank Turek and Norman Geisler, Gary Habermas, William Lane Craig, and Josh and Sean McDowell.¹⁰

Parents should ensure their children have the appropriate instruction and tools to help them understand and defend their faith. A recommended start would be the *Case for...* series of kids' books by Lee Strobel.¹¹ The researcher recommends that parents go through the study with their kids and share how they have grown during the process. Moreover, the researcher suggests giving their kids the books cited in this project as they reach their teens.

⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology Workbook: Study Questions and Practical Exercises for Learning Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020). John MacArthur, *A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

¹⁰ See Frank Turek and Norm Geisler, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be An Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004); William L. Craig, *The Son Rises: Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017); Gary Habermas, *Risen Indeed: A Historical Investigation Into the Resurrection of Jesus* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021); Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Life Changing Truth for a Skeptical World* (Nashville, TN: Harper Collins, 2017).

¹¹ Lee Strobel, *Case For...Series for Kids* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zonderkidz, 2010).

Research Applications

The results of this study are clear. If believers go through a focused study on the resurrection of Jesus, then they will be better equipped to articulate and defend the resurrection. In addition, they will be able to understand the resurrection's soteriological implications. The question is whether leaders and pastors will take the need for a focused study on the resurrection seriously. One of the greatest issues facing believers today is whether they will be disciples of Jesus and learn to trust Him and live out their faith.¹² Thus, the implication is for others to implement focused studies, like the one in this project, to help others understand the resurrection of Jesus and its soteriological implications.

Research Limitations

As mentioned in Chapter 1, one of the limitations of this research project was the size of the group. It could have been more beneficial to have a larger group to enhance the generalizability of the results of this study. A larger study group would have enlarged the data set from which to draw conclusions with broader implications. One of the main benefits of having a larger study group is that it can help researchers to identify patterns or trends in the data that may not be evident in a smaller group. For instance, since this project only had a few participants, applying the finding to the larger population is impossible. If the study group is larger, it could be easier to identify statistically significant differences or correlations that can be used to inform future research. Another benefit of a larger study group is that it could increase the applicability to other contexts. Moreover, it could have been beneficial to have a separate group go through a sermon series on the same topic and compare the effectiveness of small group studies and sermons on the same subject through the use of pre and post-study surveys and interviews.

¹² Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*, xv.

Further Research

Further research merits attention to the connection between the resurrection of Jesus and sanctification. If, as Gary Habermas says, every doctrine of Christianity sits on the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus, then further research should be done on the doctrine of sanctification.¹³ Moreover, every doctrine of Christianity should be reexamined in light of the resurrection of Jesus. This is not to say that the current evangelical understanding of these doctrines is wrong, but perhaps, the resurrection of Jesus could provide additional insight into understanding these doctrines. For example, how does the resurrection of Jesus change one's view of justification? Since Jesus was "raised for our justification" (Rom 4:24, ESV), how does this passage, and Christ's resurrection, inform one's understanding of justification?¹⁴

In addition, further research should be conducted on the church as a whole and Christians' understanding of the historicity of the resurrection and its implications for Christianity. If Life Church is any indication, then perhaps, many believers worldwide do not properly understand the resurrection and its soteriological implications. As mentioned in Chapter 2, William Lane Craig stated that Christianity stands or falls on the event of the resurrection of Jesus. Therefore, believers need to understand the importance of this event.¹⁵

Final Words

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a study on the resurrection at Life Church in order for members of Life Church to understand what Scripture teaches about salvation. As demonstrated in the results, this project satisfactorily addressed the problem.

¹³ Gary Habermas, *Risen Indeed*, 35.

¹⁴ See the debate on justification by faith by John Piper and N.T. Wright. Trevin Wax, "The Justification Debate: A Primer, June 26, 2009, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/june/29.34.html>.

¹⁵ Craig, *The Son Rises*, 7.

Moreover, as demonstrated in the pre-study interviews and surveys, there was a need for members of Life Church to understand the resurrection and its soteriological implications. Since the resurrection of Jesus is the most important doctrine of Christianity, then it is clear that the church must take understanding and defending this doctrine seriously. Moreover, as the results attest, when a study is done on the resurrection of Jesus, participants will understand and be able to defend their belief in the resurrection better and have hope in the darkest of hours. Tim Keller, in the face of cancer and death, wrote this:

Theoretically, everyone knows that they could die at any moment. But a diagnosis of cancer or heart disease or the threat of a pandemic transfers us into the realm of those who know it as an immediate reality. During a dark time for most of the world, and for me personally, as we all long and grasp for hope, there is no better place to look than the resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹⁶

At 5:41 in the morning on September 18, 2021, the researcher got a call from a doctor that informed him that his father was present with Jesus in eternity. The researcher's father knew and believed in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He believed in the resurrection of Christ and the hope of eternity with Him. The researcher officiated his father's funeral just six days after his death. The message was centered on the hope that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus provides.

Since the researcher's father's passing, Jesus has provided hope, assurance, and peace like nothing else can amid deep grief. Truly, the risen Jesus is the cornerstone of the believer's hope.¹⁷ Three months before his father's passing, the researcher began his journey of getting his DMIN in apologetics and theology. Moreover, a year prior, God had begun moving the researcher toward investigating the resurrection of Jesus. Since Jesus rose from the dead, one can

¹⁶ Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, xiv.

¹⁷ Wright and Bird, *The New Testament*, 306.

look to Him and know that nothing can take away what His resurrection promises. That is life with Him forever.

How does one move from a theoretical understanding of the resurrection of Christ to an understanding that is lived out and practiced? Tim Keller would say, “And there is no greater hope possible than to believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Saint Paul says he was ‘crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God’s power (2 Corinthians 13:4) [*sic*].’ If you grasp this great fact of history, then even if you find things going dark, this hope becomes a light for you when all other lights go out.”¹⁸ When tragedy hits, nothing provides more comfort than knowing that Christ is risen, He is in you, and He promises that nothing can separate you from His love (Matt 28:6; Gal 2:20; Rom 8:38-39).

¹⁸ Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, xiii.

APPENDIX A
RECRUITMENT LETTER

January 1, 2023

Dear _____,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a DMIN degree. The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to develop and implement a study on the resurrection at Life Church, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, a believer in Christ, and willing to learn. Participants, if willing, will be asked to take part of a study, answer a questionnaire, and may be interviewed. It should take approximately five weeks to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please reply yes.

A consent document attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me within a week.

Sincerely,

Zach Maldonado
Liberty University

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Consent

Title of the Project: Understanding the Resurrection of Jesus and Its Soteriological Significance

Principal Investigator: Zach Maldonado, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be eighteen years of age, a believer in Jesus Christ, and willing to be educated. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to develop and implement a study on the resurrection of Jesus Christ at Life Church.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to complete a questionnaire before and after the study and take part in an interview.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The benefit of this study will be twofold. Firstly, participants of this study will be engaged in a robust study of God's Word that will build them up and renew their minds (Acts 20:32; Rom 12:2). Second, they will be able to understand and articulate what they believe about salvation so that they are not "carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:14).

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.

- Participant responses will be confidential. The participant identities will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and will not be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

What are the costs to you to be part of the study?

There are no costs associated with this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Life Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Zach Maldonado. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Owens at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: *The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX C

PRE-STUDY AND POST-STUDY SURVEY

1. What are some facts that establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?
2. What evidence is there outside of the Bible for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?
3. Why is the resurrection of Jesus the most important aspect of the Christian faith?
4. What is salvation?
5. How does the resurrection of Jesus secure one's salvation?
6. Explain why the cross alone is not sufficient to save.
7. What are some objections to the resurrection of Jesus?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What would be the impact on the validity of Christianity if the resurrection of Jesus was proven false?
2. What is so important about Jesus' bodily resurrection?
3. What evidence is there for the resurrection?
4. Which is most important in a gospel presentation, the resurrection or the cross? Why?
5. If Jesus had not risen, what would that mean for your faith?

APPENDIX E

PERMISSION REQUEST LETTER

01.01.2023

Jane and John Doe

Dear _____,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a DMIN degree. The title of my research project is “Understanding the Resurrection of Jesus and Its Soteriological Significance” and the purpose of this DMIN action research project is to develop and implement a study on the resurrection of Jesus at Life Church.

I am writing to request your permission to contact members of your group to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, a believer in Christ, and willing to learn. Participants, if willing, will be asked to take part of a study, answer a questionnaire, and may be interviewed. It should take approximately five weeks to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email to [REDACTED]. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Zach Maldonado
Liberty University

APPENDIX F
PERMISSION LETTER

01.01.2023

Zach Maldonado

Dear Zach Maldonado,

After careful review of your research proposal entitled “Understanding the Resurrection of Jesus and Its Soteriological Significance,” we have decided to grant you permission to access our membership list and invite them to participate in your study.

We will provide our membership list to Zach Maldonado and Zach Maldonado may use the list to contact our members to invite them to participate in his research study.

Sincerely,

Jane and John Doe

APPENDIX G

FIVE-LESSON STUDY ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

Lesson 1: The Importance of the Resurrection

Learning Objective: Participants will discover the importance of Jesus's resurrection by doing a study on the resurrection in Scripture.

Points:

1. The resurrection is the central message of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15).
2. The cross is invalid without the resurrection.
3. The Christian hope is lost without the resurrection.
4. The Christian life cannot be lived without the resurrection.
5. The necessity of the resurrection for the Christian faith.
6. The Old and New Testament teaching on the resurrection.

Discussion Questions: What is the gospel? How does the resurrection of Jesus shape how we understand the gospel? What does the resurrection mean for you personally? How have you lost focus of the resurrection of Jesus and its importance?

Lesson 2: The Historicity of the Resurrection, Part 1

Learning Objective: Participants will commit themselves to understanding the historicity of the resurrection by internalizing what was learned.

Points:

1. Jesus died by crucifixion.
2. The tomb is empty and He was buried.
3. The appearances of Jesus.
4. The transformation of Jesus's disciples.
5. The trustworthiness of the four Gospels.
6. The evidence outside of the Bible.

Discussion Questions: What historical evidence is there for the resurrection? What are some objections to the resurrection? What are the minimal facts for the resurrection of Jesus? What piece of evidence is most compelling to you and why?

Lesson 3: The Historicity of the Resurrection, Part 2

Learning Objective: Participants will recognize the theories against the resurrection of Jesus by identifying the popular theories raised against the resurrection.

Points:

1. The swoon theory.

2. The stolen body theory.
3. Hallucination theory.
4. Jesus wasn't buried theory
5. The pagan myth theory.

Discussion Questions: What are doubts you have about the resurrection? Why did Jesus need to physically rise from the dead? What are some ways you can defend the resurrection? Is there any theory that makes you question the resurrection?

Lesson 4: The Resurrection and Your Salvation

Learning Objective: Participants will recognize the soteriological implications of the resurrection by doing a study on the salvation and the resurrection in Scripture.

Points:

1. The resurrection of Jesus shapes how we understand salvation.
2. The resurrection justifies you.
3. The resurrection unites you to Christ.
4. The cross would not have worked if Christ did not resurrect from the dead.
5. The resurrection secures you.

Discussion Questions: What is salvation? How does Jesus save you and what role does the resurrection play in that? How does the resurrection of Jesus assure your salvation?

Lesson 5: Jesus and His resurrection

Learning Objective: Participants will have confidence in the Person of Jesus by remembering who He is through Scripture.

Points:

1. Jesus is God.
2. Jesus is Lord.
3. Jesus is the Messiah.
4. Jesus's teachings are true.
5. Jesus is alive.

Discussion Questions: What does it mean that Jesus is Lord? Why is Jesus more than just an example or good teacher? Who is Jesus? How does the resurrection of Jesus solidify His claims?

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IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

December 1, 2022

Zachary Maldonado
Howard Owens

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY22-23-593 Understanding the Resurrection of Jesus and Its Soteriological Significance

Dear Zachary Maldonado and Howard Owens,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your project is not considered human subjects research because it will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46.102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application. Any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. **If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.**

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office