



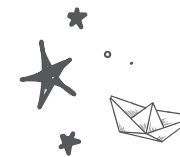
Eternity

What difference does the Resurrection make?

EQUIP 2020
YEAR 7-9 DEVOTIONAL



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Eternity

Thanks for joining us for EQUIP at Home! We're sad not to be meeting in person as EQUIP Teens this year, but we still wanted to do something special together, so a group of young women have created this devotional for us to do together over the next couple of weeks, even though we're... apart!

Eternity might seem a long way away (isn't that just an old people thing?), but as we've already been hearing in 1 Corinthians 15-16, Paul says that understanding eternity makes all the difference to the way people live now! And that includes teens. But what difference does eternity make to our lives now?

Each weekday for the next two weeks, we'll be thinking about the difference the resurrection makes to teens — what does it look like to stand firm in the hope of eternity and how can we make the most of our time as teens in light of the resurrection? So join us each weekday after episodes 1 and 2 of EQUIP at Home as we work through this devotional together.

How to use this devotional

- Grab your bible, the print out of 1 Corinthians 15-16, a pen and a device - there are short videos to watch each day on the website: www.equip.org.au/teens-videos
- Finding a quiet spot and a regular time each day can help.
- Take some time to **read, reflect and pray** about what you've read and what has challenged you.
- If you have access to instagram, you can interact with us and other teens who are doing the devotional at www.instagram.com/equipteens or @equipteens
- If you miss a day, that's OK! Keep going at your own pace.

Our prayer is that as we journey through this devotional together God would cause us to stand firm in the truth of the gospel and that we would overflow in doing the work of the Lord.

Love,

Mathea & Lucy





Meet our writers

We asked them all:

1. What year did you put your trust in Jesus and add your name to the list of resurrection witnesses?
2. Tell us something you're looking forward to in eternity?
3. What's one way you're involved in the work of the Lord, i.e. eternal work (1 Cor 15:58)



Naomi Ingram

“I added my name to the list of resurrection witnesses in 2006 when I was in year 5, and I'm looking forward to no more death or crying or pain in eternity! One way I'm involved in the work of the Lord is reading the bible with uni students”

“I don't remember a specific time I became a Christian, but I remember seeing Jesus' invitation into his kingdom even clearer in early high school. I'm looking forward to seeing people from all around the world all gathered around Jesus in the new creation! And I love being involved in the work of the Lord as I lead the Year 7-9 legends at my church in Sunday bible study!”



Emma Warren



Karen Lawson-Smith

“I became a resurrection witness when I was in year 5 in 1999 but it was in year 10 when I realised just how amazing it was to be forgiven! I look forward to no more tears and instead singing God's praises all day long! One way I'm involved in the work of the Lord is through leading youth group in my church.”

“I put my trust in Jesus in 2005, when I was in first year of high school, and I'm really looking forward to meeting so many brothers and sisters in Christ and hearing stories of Jesus' work through the ages in eternity. One way I'm involved in eternal work is by reading the Bible to my little girl... she is only 11 months so doesn't understand much but I hope this will be part of her always knowing her Saviour's love!”



Kirsten McKinlay



Chris Bransdon

“I've always known Jesus, but it wasn't until first year uni that my faith started to seriously determine the way I lived my life. I'm looking forward to seeing God face to face without any shame and feeling like I'm exactly where I belong. I'm currently 7 months pregnant and soon, raising a bub will be one of the primary ways I work for the Lord. I've had to let go of lots of things I've loved doing for a little while - including youth ministry - but when our little family is settled, I'll take on whatever comes my way!”

“My name was added to the list of witnesses when I was really young - I don't remember a time when I didn't trust Jesus. I'm really looking forward to bodies that never get hurt or start to not work as well; to no more pain or crying or tears! It's going to be such a joyous place! I do the work of the Lord each day teaching my son about Jesus and how to live for Him. We love praying together and reading the Bible before bed.”



Nicky Gangemi



Caitlin Matthei

“I became a resurrection witness in 2014. I was in Year 10 and that's when I fully grasped for myself that I am saved by grace, not by my own efforts. I can't wait to experience rest with God forever in eternity! I get the great privilege of doing eternal work by helping teenagers grow in their faith at my local youth group, and getting to know God better through his word with fellow uni students at UNSW.”

“I'm so thankful for my Christian parents who taught me the gospel - for as long as I can remember I have known Jesus as my Lord and Saviour! I so much look forward to enjoying eternity with no more tears and sadness! I currently work alongside my husband at our church in Belfast, Northern Ireland and get to be involved in lots of different things including running our Sunday morning kids programme.”



Jodie Blair



Avril Lonsdale

“A simple invitation to youth group from a friend in high school meant I had the chance to learn about grace and put my trust in Jesus. I've been a resurrection witness now since 2005 when I was in year 10! There are so many things I'm looking forward to, but seeing Jesus in the flesh and spending eternity with him has got to be high on my list! I really love reading the Bible with different people and growing in our love of God together.”



Week 1

Standing Firm





Am I too young to think about Eternity?

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-57



Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-57

I wonder if you had thought much about eternity before EQUIP this year? Does Jesus' resurrection impact your daily life? Surely our resurrection and eternity are such a long way away that they don't really matter much when we're teens? To be honest, when I was a teenager, this was me.

When I turned 14, my life was very normal. I had a great family, friends at school and enjoyed sport and music. I had put my trust in Jesus, and I knew that His death and resurrection was good news. But at the time, this knowledge had very little impact on my daily life. It might have been important for later, but didn't matter much to me yet.

But in December that year, my life turned completely upside down. My beautiful healthy mum was suddenly diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer and given 3-6 months to live. It was so hard to grasp that Mum was only here on earth for a little while longer. Suddenly, death was very real, and very close to home. And suddenly, the knowledge that Jesus died and rose again, meant so much more for my daily life.

His resurrection meant that... my mum, who trusted in Jesus, was able to say with joy:

"Death has been swallowed up in victory"

"Where, O death, is your victory?"

Where, O death, is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God. He gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ'.

(1 Cor 15:55-56)

His resurrection meant that... my family and I were (and still are) able to grieve with hope. It meant we were (and still are) able to spend time crying, but also rejoicing. Because Jesus' victory over death means that death is not the end. Like Jesus, my mum will one day be resurrected too!

When I first started High School, I didn't want to stand out for being a Christian. I just wanted to fit in. But now Jesus' resurrection showed me that living for Him – the guy who defeated death! – was so much better compared to fitting in or being popular. And this gave me greater boldness to live out my convictions and invite people to the Christian group at school. It made me think about what things really matter in the light

of eternity.

By God's amazing grace, Mum lived for an extra three years following her diagnosis. During that time, my family and I had the privilege of seeing Mum grow to trust Jesus more as the cancer continued to spread throughout her body.

The final week before my mum died, we prayed that God would "take her in His own perfect timing", and He did! He took my mum on Easter Sunday, the day we celebrate Jesus' resurrection! It gave my family such comfort that day to celebrate His resurrection and to remember that death did not have the final word on my mum's life.

I hope you take the time to think deeply about eternity. Because death is real, whether it's come close to you yet or not. Even teenagers feel death, fear it, face it. But, death has been swallowed up in Jesus' victory! So my prayer for you is that you come to delight now in Jesus' victory over death and that you will live for him now, rather than for other good things that pass away and matter less. Because you're never too young to live for what really matters in the light of eternity.

Reflect

- What is your attitude towards death?
How does Jesus' victory over death (1 Cor 15:55-56) encourage or comfort you?
- If death came close to you now, what things might you realise matter less, in light of eternity? E.g.
 - Good grades
 - Social media presence e.g. what we post, how many followers
 - How we look/dress
 - Reputation
 - _____
 (something else? Feel free to add your own option.)

Journal



Pray

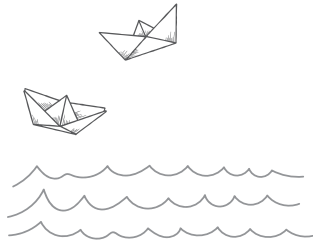
Heavenly Father,
thank You that Jesus' resurrection means that death does not have the final word.
Thank You that because of Jesus' resurrection we can say with joy "where oh death is your victory? where oh death is your sting?". Please help me to delight in following Jesus (the guy who defeated death) and help it to impact my daily life. Amen.





Standing firm...

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-3, 58; 16:13



- Read 1 Corinthians 15-16, and see if you can find how many times the words 'stand' or 'stand firm' occur. (Hint: Beginning and end of chapter 15, 16:13)
- What is Paul asking the Corinthians to 'stand' or 'stand firm' in (15:1)? Does this help us to understand 15:58 and 16:13?

Have you ever walked up Mt. Kosciuszko? I went there a few years ago, on my Year 11 school camp. We all rugged up in our new jackets and beanies, and set off walking up the mountain trail. I remember the wind was like nothing I've ever experienced. It was so so hard to stand firm! It wasn't that the ground was shaky, the winds around us were just so strong.

In 1 Corinthians 15-16, Paul uses similar imagery of "standing" firm, strong and immovable. We see the word 'stand' repeated three times! I wonder if you were able to see what Paul was encouraging the Corinthian Christians to stand firm in?

"Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you..." (15:1-2)

Paul is reminding the Corinthians of the gospel, the true news, that they are standing in: that "Christ died for our sins", and was "raised on the third day" to life (15:3-4). He urges them to hold firmly (15:2) to this gospel news about Jesus, because it saves us!

Have you taken your stand in the gospel?

Do you really, deep down believe that Jesus died on a cross, and rose to life after three days? *It is so important to take your stand in the gospel.*

Paul says if Jesus didn't rise, then our faith and hope would be useless, because we wouldn't have any hope after death. But Jesus has risen as King! He offers us eternal life, and Paul calls us to keep trusting in the gospel.

What makes it hard to stand firm in the gospel?

Just as my friends and I found it hard to stand firm on Mt. Kosciuszko, it is hard to stand firm in the gospel. There are winds pushing us in all different directions. Paul tells the Corinthians to "be on your guard" (16:13), because it is hard to keep sticking with

the truth about Jesus!

When I was going through the HSC, sometimes I felt like helping out at kids church was wasting time that I could have spent studying. And new challenges come up – when I've talked to students at uni about Jesus, many say that Christianity is outdated and wrong. You might feel embarrassed talking about Jesus around non-Christian friends, or you might find church with your family hard and just not enjoyable.

Whatever stage we're in, standing firm in the gospel is hard!! That's why for the rest of this week we'll be thinking about reasons to stand firm, and next week we will tackle issues that can make standing firm hard.

So, why is it worth standing firm in the gospel?

So many voices around us make it hard to keep trusting in the gospel, and to keep on living for Jesus. But Jesus has risen as King of the world – this king and the truth about him are so worth trusting!

Helping out at kids church helped me to keep prioritising Jesus over school. And sharing about Jesus – even when people don't believe – pushes me to trust in the gospel even more. God gives us "victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (15:57).

So as Paul told the Corinthians, my dear sisters, *"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong."*

Reflect

- When did you take your stand in the gospel?
- What makes it hard to stand firm in the gospel?
- Why is it worth standing firm in the gospel?

Journal

Pray

Heavenly Father, thank You that Jesus did rise from the dead, defeating death. Thank You that He rose to life, and that means I will rise again too. Please help me to trust in Him, and keep standing firm in the gospel. Amen.

📺 **Today's video:** Personal stories of standing firm in the gospel.





...Because it's true.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-11



Today we begin a short series of three devotionals answering the question, "Why should I stand firm in the gospel?" from 1 Corinthians 15-16.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

One of my favourite things about teaching high school scripture was also one of the most difficult: the questions! Christianity is a faith that makes some pretty big claims, and whenever we'd discuss the resurrection, I was in the firing line for sure. You may have experienced this yourself. People say things like:

"I can only really believe in things that I've seen"

And –

"Where's the evidence?"

Paul was writing to a similarly sceptical audience. The Corinthians believed in an afterlife, but they couldn't get their heads around the idea that Christians might have a bodily resurrection. Some of the Corinthians had started to say that there was no such thing as the resurrection of the dead!

It's such a crazy claim that you can't really blame them for questioning it. But Paul isn't so forgiving. In verses 1-2 he begins his defence of the resurrection by saying that really, he's surprised a defence is needed at all! The Corinthians had already received this true news, they'd taken their stand on it, they were being saved by it. We get the vibe that having to remind an established church that Jesus' resurrection is true is like having to explain to an advanced maths class that $2+2=4!$

Have a look for yourself at verses 3-4. What do they teach you about the basic content of the gospel? Is anything repeated?

We can see, then, that the resurrection is essential gospel teaching – it's not something that Paul has made up. And how could it be? Look at the long list of people in verses 4-8 who saw Jesus after he was raised from the dead. By listing witnesses, Paul grounds Christianity firmly in this resurrection event that he claims can be verified. At this point, Paul's evidence for the resurrection is not just biblical, but *historical*.

In Acts 26 Paul also defends the resurrection before King Agrippa, who was perhaps

as friendly towards Christianity as those kids in my high-school scripture classes. King Agrippa hears the claims that Paul makes about his ministry and says he must be insane. But Paul counters in verse 26: "the King is familiar with these things... I am convinced that none of it has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner."

Nothing about the resurrection of Jesus was low-key. It was public and political, and it was dangerous to preach, as we continually read in the New Testament. And yet, Paul and the apostles never backed down. They stood firm and proclaimed the death and resurrection of Jesus whatever the cost, reasoning with the crowds from the Scriptures and from the fact of the event itself. The Holy Spirit worked powerfully in them as they spoke, so that neither kings nor ordinary citizens, neither religious leaders nor philosophers, were able to effectively quash the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. It's easy for us, separated from Jesus' resurrection by years, kilometres and cultural differences, to miss this. But let's remember that what we read in the pages of Scripture was an actual, public reality. Jesus' resurrection isn't just an idea, it was historical fact.

My scripture students always demand evidence for the resurrection, but by the time we've finished working through 1 Corinthians 15, I return the favour and challenge them: what evidence is there that it isn't true?

I'm still waiting!



Reflect

- Are you convinced of the truth of the resurrection? Why or why not?
- How can this passage, and the apostles' example of never backing down as they reasoned from Scripture and the event itself, encourage you to stand firm, and speak about the resurrection with boldness?

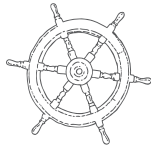
Journal

Pray

Heavenly Father, thank You that You have made Yourself known in the Scriptures. Thank You that You have been working in history to reconcile believers to yourself through Jesus. Please help me to stand firm on the truth of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and to speak about it boldly with others. Amen.

Today's video: How to talk about the resurrection with your friends.

Chris' Book Recommendations: "Know Why You Believe" by Paul E. Little, "The Reason for God" by Tim Keller, "Mere Christianity" by C.S. Lewis, and "Raised Forever" by Rory Shiner.



...Because victory over sin is sure.



1 CORINTHIANS 15:16-17, 56-57

Read 1 Cor 15:16-17 and v56-57

- What does it mean for the Corinthian church if the dead are not raised?

Make a flowchart of Paul's logic in verses 16 and 17.

If the dead are not raised → _____ → _____

- If Jesus hasn't been raised why are we still dead in our sins? (This is a tricky one.)

In the ancient Graeco-Roman world of Paul and the Corinthians, lots of educated people believed that death ended life completely. (It's not just an ancient belief – I'm sure you have lots of friends who believe this too!) The idea of having a physical body after death seemed ridiculous – and it looks like some of the Christians in Corinth believed this too, saying the dead weren't raised. But here Paul shows them what a terrible mistake this is.

It is so, so important to know that Jesus has been raised because this gives us certainty that His death was enough to deal with our sins. Sin has been defeated! Jesus has been victorious over sin. And so we are no longer in our sins, our salvation is sure. We are safe with Him, now... and forever!

Yet, often it doesn't feel like we're victorious over sin. We still see sin and its effects all around us. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed with how much I fall short of God's standards. I'm often so focused on myself. I ignore ways I could show love to others. I hurt those I love most with harsh words that I soon regret. Then I'm reluctant to apologise. Maybe you can relate.

When I so obviously fail, I wonder whether I'm really victorious. Has sin really been defeated? When I'm feeling overwhelmed and weary with sin and suffering, I (strangely?!) find it helpful to remember VE Day – the day that victory was finally declared in Europe at the end of WW2. After years of unimaginable suffering, people rightly celebrated like never before. But... it would be a long time before the full effects of victory were felt. Prisoners hadn't yet been released, rationing continued, millions had lost homes and loved ones. The enemy was defeated, but for now they still lived with these awful effects of war.

It's a bit like that with Jesus' victory. His victory is real – He really has defeated sin – and you share that victory with him. His resurrection is proof of this! But for now we live with sin and its effects, until the day when He returns and raises us in perfect, sinless



new bodies for a perfect, sinless new world. Only then will we fully know and feel and enjoy his victory. I can't wait for that day!

Until then, what helps? I find Romans 8 a great passage to read through when my mind doubts what is absolutely unchanging. It reminds me of the complete security we have in Christ: there is now no condemnation, we are chosen by God, adopted as His very own children. We can't lose that status. Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Keith and Kristen Getty's song, "Christ our Hope in Life and Death" – inspired by the first part of the Heidelberg Catechism* – is also a wonderful reminder of our great confidence in life and death: "I am not my own, but belong body and soul to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ", it says. He is the faithful one. He will keep you. So when we feel overwhelmed by sin and doubts, we look to him. We remember Jesus' resurrection, His victory over sin and its effects. And we look forward to the day when everything, including our bodies will be perfect. But until then, our salvation is sure. We can stand firm.

**The Heidelberg Catechism is a statement of faith that Christians have used for centuries which I'd recommend reading as a beautiful encouragement of your safety in Jesus, now and forever.*

Reflect

- Do you feel like victory is yours because of Jesus? What things cause you to doubt that your salvation is sure/you are no longer in your sins?
- What can help you when your feelings are out of sync with reality?

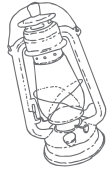


Some words that help	Some people that help	Some actions that help

Pray

Heavenly Father, thank You that Jesus really does have the victory over sin, and that I am no longer in my sins. As I wait for the day when Jesus returns, when I'll finally be free from sin and its effects, please help me to keep looking to His resurrection and to be reminded that my salvation is sure, today and always. Thank you that you work all things together for my good and that you will keep me safe until the end. In Jesus' name. Amen.

📺 **Today's video:** Thinking deeper on standing firm in suffering, sin and doubts.



...Because death is not the end.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:30-34



Read 1 Corinthians 15:30-34

- What kind of challenges has Paul faced for believing and preaching the gospel of the resurrection?
- But if the dead are not raised, how does Paul say people should live instead?
- What is Paul rebuking the Corinthians for?

I have some friends and their main concerns in life are: where they are going on their next big holiday, how to make their house look as beautiful as a picture out of a magazine, how they can earn the most money, and be “bikini-bod ready” for summer. And when I chat to them, it makes sense. They are convinced they have 80-90 years of life on this earth and that’s it. After that, nothing. And if this life is all there is, then of course they’re going to: eat, drink, and enjoy it all now! Do you know people like this? Their Instagram, their sporting skills, their sense of fashion – they’ve got to be amazing now, because life doesn’t last forever!

However, Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians, Christians have different priorities. The resurrection changes how we view life – we know that death is not the end! We don’t only have 80-90 years on this earth, we have all of eternity – and that’s a really long time!

But even though we know that death is not the end, it can be really tempting to follow the crowd and live as though it is. Instead of living for eternity, we can be tempted to think it’s our stuff that matters – our phones, our cutest clothes, our followers on social media. Or we can be tempted to strive for the best possible ATAR, to get the best possible job, and be successful and rich! (Or at least comfortable.) And we can be tempted to make our life all about being liked or funny, or making it to the top in our sport.

But the reality is that none of these things go with us when we die. We cannot take any of it into eternity. It can be easy to chase after the stuff of this life, because they are here and now, and right in front of us. Surely they’re worth trusting in? But like the Corinthians, we need to have a head and heart check, and be reminded of God’s eternal perspective and priorities. And as we live in light of these, we will begin to stand out. Maybe you won’t swear like everyone else does? Maybe you’ll prioritise going to church over your Sunday sports game? Maybe you won’t spend that lunchtime with your friends because you’re going to the Christian group? Maybe you’ll invite them to come too?

Sometimes standing out and being different is really hard. In Paul’s case, it meant his neck was on the line! But we know it is worth it, because eternity is real, and it’s so much better and longer than just the short time we have here on earth.

So can I encourage you, when you are tempted to think you only live once (#YOLO), or that you’ve got to squeeze all the fun and comfort and success as you can out of this short life, look back to Jesus and to His death and resurrection. Knowing we will live for eternity changes our perspective and our priorities – we’re on about Jesus, and the stuff that lasts. So, live your life with an eternal goal, not just a goal for the coming days, weeks, months, and years. Stand firm in God’s promise of resurrection and stand out amongst your friends in a way that brings glory to God!



Reflect

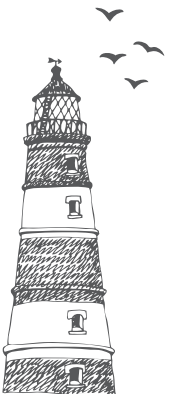
- If a stranger looked at your life, what might they think you’re living for? Are you living for something that lasts?
- What are some challenges we can endure, knowing we will live for eternity?
- What are some things that you can prioritise less or give up, and what will you prioritise more, knowing we will live for eternity?

Journal

Pray

Dear Heavenly Father, please help me to keep eternity as my focus. Help me not to become distracted by the things in this world. When I stand out because I have different priorities to my friends please keep me bold for your sake. Amen.

📺 **Today’s video:** Nicky’s story of learning to stand firm and stand out.





Week 2

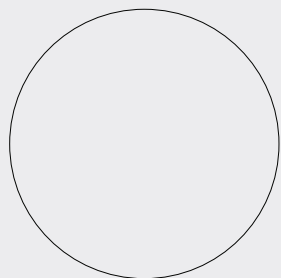
Eternal Work



What work lasts?

1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

- Draw a pie chart that summarises which activities you spend your time doing in your average week.



If you had to rank the top 3 most important activities in your week (no matter how much time they got in your pie chart), what would they be?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

- In 1 Corinthians 15:58, Paul concludes, “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.”
What do you think it means for something to be “in vain”?

When I was in high school, a question I often heard from teachers and guest speakers at assemblies was, “How are you going to make your mark on the world?” Would it be through a scientific discovery? Fighting climate change? Making an impact as a doctor, lawyer, writer, or teacher? I wonder if you’ve ever been faced with this question too.

Or maybe your goals are a little closer to home. You want to make a mark on the people you love, have a family who love you deeply, and be remembered for the little impacts you made in people’s lives.

The older we get, the more we begin to question the purpose of our lives – what’s going to last? That’s the question behind the electives we choose, the extracurricular activities we do, or even the friends we decide to make. But that raises a deeper question: what actually does last?

In the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament, the Teacher has a good look at the world, and concludes: “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless! What do people gain from all their labour at which they toil under the sun?” (Ecc 1:2b-3). Ultimately,



the Teacher sees that because we all die – whether we are rich or poor, wise or foolish – our labour cannot last.

So, if we will all die one day, what does last?

The Teacher did observe some truth about this earthly life under the sun – but there is a bigger picture that he didn’t see. This is the picture of eternity that we have the privilege of seeing clearly because God has so graciously shown it to us in his Word.

So far in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul has shown us that because Jesus rose, he reigns as Lord over everything and will one day fully destroy the last enemy of death (v25-26)! And that all those who trust in him will one day rise to eternal life with him (v20-22).

So the one thing that really lasts eternally is people! In 1 Corinthians 15:50-56, Paul explains that people who have Jesus as their Saviour and King will be raised in lasting, imperishable bodies fit for eternal life. This raises two very important questions:

- **Have you trusted Jesus and received this eternal life for yourself?**
- **Who are you going to share this news of eternal life with?**

Since eternal life is found in Jesus alone, the most important and lasting thing that we can ever do with our lives is to help people receive this incredible gift of life. And you can do this incredible, lasting work right now, before even finishing high school!

So what is this labour that is not in vain? What can we spend our lives doing that really will last? As Paul says, it is the “work of the Lord” (v58) – serving God, encouraging His people and sharing the gospel with others who need to hear it! It may be hard and it may mean standing out, but it is so worth it because it really will last. Therefore, **“Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain”** (1 Cor 15:58).



Reflect

- With the bigger picture of eternity in sight, what are the most important things you do in your week?
- Let’s do the work that lasts! What would it look like for you to prayerfully share the gospel with friends/family you already spend your week with? (Think specifically about two people in your life who need to know Jesus and spend time praying for them).

Pray

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You that because Jesus died and rose again, I can have eternal life in him. Please help me to live with eternity in view. Help me to share the good news of Jesus with others, and please soften their hearts so that they too can receive eternal life. Thank you that this labour is not in vain. Amen.

📺 **Today’s video:** Three tips for sharing the gospel with our friends.



What about purpose?

COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

Today we begin another short series, this time considering FAQs about things that can make standing firm hard. And in light of yesterday's encouragement to do the work that lasts, we'll stop each day and ask, "Why is what the Bible says about today's topic good news for our friends who don't yet know Jesus?" We hope this helps you as you seek to keep standing firm and give yourself fully to the work that lasts!

The last few months of COVID have raised lots of questions for people. I haven't been able to do lots of the things I love, and so I've often felt a little bit lost and directionless. One of the questions that I've been particularly wrestling with is, "how does my life have direction and purpose? Is what I'm doing worthwhile and valuable? Am I valuable and worthwhile?"

Colossians 3:1-17 is a great comfort in answering these questions as it fleshes out the 'why' of our lives, by answering the 'who' question... and that all starts with the resurrection!

Read Colossians 3:1-17

- Draw a picture or a mind map of all the ways that the believer is described in this passage (hint: look particularly at verses 1-3, 10, 12 & 15). Where are they, who are they, what are they wearing?

Paul (who wrote this part of the Bible, as well as 1 Corinthians) has just spent the last two chapters reminding his readers about how great and awesome Jesus is. He then says that if we trust Jesus, we too (!) are raised with him (v1). Therefore, we are to seek the things that are above. Because that's where we are, with Jesus! So who are we? Raised with Christ! What we are seeking? Things above! That's what our lives are about: Jesus, and the stuff that's His. Even when life is hard, the goal is to become more like Jesus!

When I was (trying!) to learn to ride a bike, someone wisely told me that wherever you look, that's where the bike will go. If you can't take your eyes off the tree because you're afraid of crashing into it, you probably will! Instead, look at the gap next to the tree and the bike will follow where you're looking. It's similar here. Focus on eternity and Jesus who takes you there, and your life will go in that direction. God is kind. In fact, our life is already there! It's hidden with Jesus, so seek what is above at your already-

decided destination (v1-2).

How do we "seek the things above"? Paul gives us two actions: we put things off (v5-9), and we put things on (v12-17).

We put **off** wrong desires/longings (v5) and wrong speech (v7, 9). Paul's language is very strong: he says we are to put these things to death! How might we do this? Let's think about 'speech' – for example, slander (spreading nasty rumours). Putting slander to death will definitely mean not passing on the mean rumour or embarrassing news that your friend told you. It might even mean stopping her before she tells you so you aren't tempted to pass it on! Seeking the things above means putting slander off. Killing it.

We put **on** lots of things in verses 12-17, but there's one I want you to notice in particular.

Highlight how many times 'thankfulness' (or gratitude) occurs in these verses.

Our lives are to be shaped by thankfulness as we seek the things above, because we are reminded of what God has done for us! And so we stand firm, with our eyes fixed on Jesus and things that are above, knowing our lives now have eternal purpose.

Reflect

- What ways of speaking/thinking/behaving might you need to get rid of? Confess them to God and ask for His help to kill them.
- How might you express your thankfulness to God? Think of some ideas and try to put one into practice by the end of the day.
- Why is what the Bible says about purpose good news for your friends who don't yet know Jesus?

Journal

Pray

Heavenly Father, thank You that I am raised with Christ and bidden with Him. Thank You for giving my life purpose in Jesus. Please help me to make decisions that help me to put off sin and put on my new nature. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today's video: How knowing our purpose helps us live in the now.



What about body image?

1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-58



- Grab some pens/markers and draw an outline of yourself. Fill it with different things that describe your body, e.g. body parts you like/dislike, and characteristics, such as 'strong', 'flexible' etc. Be honest! Read over what you wrote – do you think this is an accurate picture of your body?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 and underline anything that describes what our earthly (sown) bodies are like. Do these descriptions fit with what you wrote about yourself before?
- Read the passage again, circling anything that describes what our resurrection (raised) bodies will be like. How are they different to our earthly bodies?

I recently reactivated my Instagram and while it's been great to reconnect with friends, it's been impossible to escape the endless posts about our bodies. I don't know if you feel the same!? On the one hand there are celebrities like Lizzo and Charli D'Amelio who post body positive content encouraging me to "show my body love" and "be kind to myself". But on the other hand, there are endless #fitspiration and #summerbody posts warning me to eat less, workout more and maintain a good skincare routine if I want to be attractive. Talk about mixed messages! Our world is confused about how to view our bodies. Thankfully though, as Christians we don't have to be confused because the Bible is clear when it comes to our body image.

A Realistic Picture

In 1 Corinthians 15 we're told that no matter what our bodies look like they matter to God. That's because God has given every part of His creation a physical body, including us and that body has splendour and glory (v38-40). God doesn't make junk! Everything He makes is good – and that includes us (Gen 1:31). Even the things we dislike about our bodies or wish we could fix can't change this truth.

However, that doesn't mean our bodies are perfect. Did you see how they're described? They're perishable, dishonourable, weak and natural (v42-44). Whether it's weight issues, poor eyesight, broken bones, or in my case chronic migraines, our bodies don't always look, feel or act how we want them to. Even the things we like about ourselves now will change – our bodies will fade, grow old, wrinkle and one day die altogether. There's no amount of makeup we can buy, fitness apps we can download or training sessions we can do to stop it from happening.

But thankfully, as Christians, we know that Jesus defeated death and sin when He died on the cross and rose back to life. If we trust in Him, we too will be raised with physical resurrection bodies when He returns (v52, 56-57). While our resurrection body won't be a completely new body, it won't simply be a makeover either. It will be a whole transformation! Our resurrection bodies will be imperishable, honourable, powerful and spiritual (v42-44). That is, all the things our earthly bodies are not. While I will still be Avril, I won't ever have to take a sick day again. I won't develop cancer or suffer from allergies. Not only that, I won't feel insecure or frustrated with how any of it looks or works! My earthly body with its flaws, failures and decay will be transformed. And if you trust in Jesus it will be the same for you!

So, what should I do next time I'm scrolling through Instagram? Well the answer isn't to simply accept my flaws and love the skin I'm in. No, I can mourn the fact that my body doesn't look or work how I want it to, and remember the better body waiting for me in eternity. And when I'm tempted to compare my body, and spend all my time, money and energy fixing the things I don't like, I need to remember that this body won't last forever. I might make some temporary changes, but soon it will be replaced with a body more glorious than I can imagine. And so the answer? Stand firm in Jesus and give ourselves to the work that lasts for eternity (v58). I don't need to be confused about my body or treat it like the world does. I can use my body, in all its short-lived and weak glory, to do the eternal work of the Lord and to share the hope I have for eternity.

Will you join me?

Reflect

- What would it look like to view ourselves now in light of our future transformation? How would it change what we:
 - Think or feel about our own bodies?
 - Spend our money or time on?
 - Dream about and work towards?
 - Upload to social media?
- How can we encourage one another to remember our resurrection hope when our bodies seem flawed or faulty?
- Why is what the Bible says about body image good news for your friends who don't yet know Jesus?



📺 **Today's video:** What Woolies seeds and our bodies have in common.

Journal

Pray

Thank You that You have made my body, and despite its flaws and frailty it matters to You. Please help me to have an accurate view of my earthly body, and to live as someone who knows that because of Jesus I will have a future glorious resurrection body. Please help me to use my body now to serve You always. Amen.

What about feeling connected?

JOHN 15:4-5, 9-14

Read John 15:4-5, 9-14

- Draw a picture of what Jesus is teaching here. What names can you write on the branches – who is connected to Jesus?
- Why is it important to remain in Jesus?
- What is the model of love that Jesus has provided for us?

People long for connection. We want to feel loved. We want to be valued. To share moments in our life, both good and bad. These things are built into our very core.

Living through the COVID-crisis for the past few months has made connecting tougher than normal. It's felt quite isolating not being able to gather with friends and extended family, not being able to go to church or youth group, not chatting and laughing with our friends at school as we would normally get to do five days a week! Our connections with people have been reduced to messages, Zoom chats, or just tagging each other in pictures/videos. Some of us might have had next to no contact outside our immediate family.

I'm an extrovert and a real people-person, I adore hugs when I see friends and family, and I really struggled having my connections with people reduced to seeing someone on a screen. Isn't there just something so special about seeing someone face to face, giving them a hug, sharing a packet of chips, or being able to offer them our jumper when they're cold?! Elbow taps... not quite the same.

However, in the midst of feeling disconnected, I was reminded how wonderful it was that I still had a whole community of people to connect with in my church family. It might not have been in the same ways I would have liked, or with exactly the people I would have chosen for myself, but unlike some of my non-Christian friends, I was still seeing people on Sundays in our online zoom-church gatherings, still chatting and reading the Bible via video with my bible study group and still getting regular messages from my close Christian girl friends. And we are actually connected at the deepest level... because we're all connected to Jesus!

The connections that we find in Christian community are unique because they go beyond shared interests or classes or even blood relation! When we become a Christian we become part of God's family, we become branches connected to 'the vine'. God chooses to take people who once tried to live apart from Him and connect them in with

Jesus, the source of all life itself! And as we become connected to Jesus, we also become connected to everyone else who is a part of the vine. It's pretty amazing that we are connected to Jesus Himself and also to all of God's family.

Don't hear me wrong, I'm not saying that Christian connections are without trouble. We're still sinful humans who can hurt others or be hurt by them. But when we choose to follow Jesus' example of being connected to others, we choose to sacrifice and to love others like He has loved us. He sacrificed His life so that we might be connected to Him. He loved us when we were absolutely unlovable.

Maybe you're not a Christian and this type of connection sounds foreign and unachievable to you? Let me say, it's not! When you become a Christian, you become connected with Jesus and that connection cannot be broken or diminished. Even when you are socially isolated, you're permanently and wonderfully connected to him. And when we are connected to God, we are automatically connected in the community of fellow believers. We're part of a plant that's huge, and growing, and has its roots in Jesus' sacrificial love.

Reflect

- If you're not a Christian, are you interested in connecting with God and with other Christians? (Chat to a Christian friend or contact the EQUIP team if you'd like help getting started: www.equip.org.au/contact)
- If you are a Christian, how can you keep enjoying and growing your connection to Jesus, the vine? How can you connect more with your fellow 'branches'?
 - Here are some ideas... This week, chat with someone, call, message or write a letter and encourage them to stay connected to Jesus and let them know why you're thankful for being connected to them!
- Why is what the Bible says about feeling connected good news for your friends who don't yet know Jesus?

Journal

Pray

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You that in You we find ultimate connection, meaning and hope! Thank You that I can be connected with other Christians too. Please help me to value my brothers and sisters in Christ. Help me to love them like Christ did, sacrificing for them and caring for them deeply. Please help me to share the hope I have with my non-Christian friends and family so that they too can experience true connection in You. Amen.

Today's video: Nicky's story of experiencing true, deep connection.

