

THE EVIDENTIAL HOPES OF EASTER
Next Steps Devotional Guide
April 20, 2025 — Easter Sunday

1. Christian author Hal Lindsey said this: *“We can live about 40 days without food, about 8 minutes without air, about 3 days without water, but only one second without hope.”* What do you think and why? Have you ever been in an emotional situation where you felt hopeless? What changed?
2. When it comes to Easter, how does your family and yourself celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ? Currently in the world, 2.38 billion people claim to be a Christian. That is almost 1 out of every 3 people. The Christian Church is bigger than China, Europe and the United States put together. Nothing is bigger on planet earth than the Church of Jesus Christ. Why do you think this is true?
3. Easter and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is by far the most important single event in all of history. This one event split the calendar into BC and AD. BC = Before Christ. AD = Anno Domini, “in the year of our Lord” — a reference to the Resurrection. Even the new politically correct terms of BCE — Before Common Era and CE = Common Era, still date our calendar on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Your physical birthday is dated by the Resurrection. Why do you think this event changed everything?
4. After the crucifixion, Jesus’ own disciples abandoned Him and went into hiding. They were experiencing depression, disillusionment, despair, defeat and possibly deception. After seeing the resurrected Jesus, their attitude changed. They became courageous and contagious people filled with hope. They were willing to take on the Roman Empire even with its persecution and martyrdom of Christians. Seeing the resurrected Jesus changed everything for them. How has the Resurrection of Jesus changed you?
5. In the Easter sermon, you were given 6 evidences of hope the Resurrection gives us. In any criminal investigation, the authorities look for evidence to convict or to exonerate. That evidence gives them hope they have a case or not. Have you ever looked at the evidences for the reality of the Resurrection? Why or why not? Please take a moment to read over these six summaries below of them:
 - a. The first evidential hope that the Resurrection give us is that our sins have been forgiven. How does the Resurrection in your opinion give us this undeniable hope this is true?
 - b. The second evidential hope that the Resurrection give us is that God’s Spirit is in us and we have His power. The Greek New Testament word translated as “power” in Acts 1:8 is where we get our English dynamite. Do you feel you have “dynamite” power to live in this world? Why or why not? God’s power helps us blast away the shackles of our past. What in your past do you want God to do this for you?
 - c. The third evidential hope that the Resurrection give us is that we have the hope that God will never stop loving us. God doesn’t have love; God is love and His love is unconditional. That means you can never make God love you more than He already does nor can you cause God to love you less than He does. Have you ever felt God doesn’t love you? If so, why?
 - d. The fourth evidential hope that the Resurrection give us is that we can have God’s purpose for our lives. God’s purpose for you has nothing to do with your career or your roles (i.e., husband, father, wife, mother, brother, sister, friend, and etc.). You can fulfill God’s purpose in these, but would you say you know God’s purpose for your and are you fulfilling it? Why or why not?
 - e. The fifth evidential hope that the Resurrection give us is that we have an eternal home in heaven. Unfortunately, many people have the wrong view of heaven due to TV and movies. Hollywood tends to show it as all white, we’re in white robes, with fog up to our knees, sitting on a cloud strumming a harp. Heaven is more unimaginable and indescribable than we imagine. When you think of heaven, what comes to your mind and why?
 - f. The sixth evidential hope that the Resurrection give us is that we no longer have to fear death. The number one fear people say they have is of death. Why do you think this is so?
6. As the early church began to grow and spread, a Jewish zealot and Pharisee named Saul went on a campaign to keep Jews from converting to Christianity at the support of the Jewish Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. He hunted down Jewish Christians to arrest them and kill them. The first person we know he had killed was Stephen in Jerusalem. While on the trip to Damascus, Jesus appeared to Saul. It was such a dramatic and life-changing experience, Saul changed his name to Paul. After encountering the

Resurrected Jesus, Paul went from being religious terrorist persecutor of the church to a Christian transformed planter of churches in the Roman Empire. It would be like today if an Ayatollah in Iran becoming a devout Christian evangelist. Paul went on to write 2/3's of the New Testament. This zealot of hate went on to write the best chapter on love in 1 Corinthians 13. God's love is powerful to change us, even the most anti-Christian zealot. Paul was eventually beheaded by Rome. So, what does this tell you about God's love and how the Resurrection can change a person's life?

7. Would you be willing to die for what you knew was undeniably a lie? Seeing the resurrected Jesus on Easter radically changed and motivated all the disciples to die, not for a lie, but the truth. Rome hunted them down like sheep to be slaughtered. The disciple Peter was crucified upside down. The disciple Paul was beheaded. The disciples James and Matthew were killed by a sword. The disciple Bartholomew was flayed alive. Simon was sawed in half. Thaddeus was killed with axes and clubs. Andrew was crucified on a X-shape cross. All of them died as martyrs except John. Rome tried to kill him by putting him alive in a vat of boiling oil. He did survive and was eventually put in exile on the Island of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation — a vision of what heaven is like. It is one thing to get one person to die for a known lie, it is another thing to get 12. So, what does this tell you about the truth of the Resurrection and why?
8. People have said that the two only common predictors in life are "death and taxes." Death certainly is the one common denominator none of us can escape. Here is what I believe: *"If you are not ready for death, then you are not ready for life."* Do you agree? Why or why not?
 - a. What are some common fears people have about death? When you look at Christ's Resurrection, do you view death as a transition to an eternal life and home of hope? Why or why not?
 - b. One time our daughter Emmie and I were in the car together. We came upon a cemetery at at red light. So I asked her, *"Emmie, how many people are dead in that cemetery?"* She immediately started counting and then the light changed and we had to go. In frustration she said, *"I don't know because I couldn't finish counting! Do you know daddy?"* I said, *"Yes, I do."* She asked, *"Okay, how many?"* I said, *"All of them."* We don't bury people who are alive. We bury people who are dead. If you do not accept the six evidential hopes for Easter, you will be buried not only physically, but spiritually. Your body will be put in the ground and your soul in hell. Do you care?
 - c. How prepared for death spiritually are you? I don't mean do you have a life insurance policy? If you were to die tonight, do you know for sure you would go to heaven? If God asked you, *"Why should I let you into My heaven?"*, what would you say? Being a good person and doing good works is not enough according to God. So, are you prepared?
 - d. Some of us may live 90-110 years but death eventually wins. If you were to walk through a cemetery, you would notice that no matter how long some of those people lived, they have been physically dead longer than they have were physically alive. This means that for most of us we will be physically dead longer than we ever were physically alive. So, how would you tell someone to be prepared for this reality?
 - e. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me" (NLT). There is no other way over death, to God, to heaven except through allowing the resurrected Jesus to give you His life. In the end, you have to decide who is Jesus to you. Was He some kind of deceptive liar, who has deceived billions of people to think this? Was he some kind of devilish lunatic with a Messiah-complex, that should have been institutionalized? Or is He the Lord and God He claimed? It really does not matter what others think of Jesus. What do you think? If He is Lord, then if you have not allowed Him to give you His life through salvation, would you consider doing it now? Why or why not? Is Jesus the Lord of your life? Why or why not?
 - f. To be prepared, you need to let Jesus give you His life. One of the thieves crucified on a cross next to Jesus did this. There were no formal words used by him. He simply asked, *"Lord, remember me when You come into your kingdom"* and Jesus said to him, *"Today, you will be with Me in Paradise!"* If you are not prepared for death, then please read Romans 10:9-10, 13 in a Bible. Just pray this sample prayer: *"Dear God, today I accept all that Jesus did for me on the cross. Thank You for forgiving everything I've done wrong. Thank You that I don't have to fear death. Please put Your Spirit of love and power in me. Thank You that you never will stop loving me. I want to live for the purpose that You created me for. I trust You to take me to heaven when I die. In Jesus' name, Amen!"* What is holding you back from doing this?