

# The Cross

## of first importance

### Start Here

In all areas of life, we face distractions from what is important.

- Why is it so easy for us to become distracted? (Think of examples of family life, work life, and spiritual life.)
- What happens when we focus on the most important things?

Those who focus on the most important things in their field see greater progress. But those who are distracted do not reach their goals.

That is why it is often said, “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”

### Explore the Word

What is the ‘main thing’ for our journey with the Lord?

Paul the Apostle wrote 1 Corinthians to a church that he knew had experienced the grace of God. But he also knew that many distractions had come into their walk with God. So he passionately urged them to keep the main thing the main thing.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 together.

- In verses 3-4, how does Paul describe what he says about the cross and resurrection?
- What are the truths that Paul highlights as of first importance for us?

### Main Idea (Part 1)

**The cross and resurrection is of first importance in our journey with Christ.**

Each of the stages of the cross and resurrection that Jesus went through has deep significance for our lives today and for our journey with God. Let’s consider them one at a time:

#### **Christ died for our sins and was buried (vs.3-4)**

If we are honest, none of us can say we are without sin. Romans says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23 NIV) and that “The wages of sin is death” (6:23 NIV). Our sin causes us to be separated from God and leads to death.

But Christ, the sinless one, actually died and was buried, taking our sin and death on himself. Therefore, God no longer counts our sin against us. When we put our faith in Jesus and what he has done for us, we are reconciled to God – free from shame, free from eternal death, and no longer separated from him.

*Why is this of first importance? How can living free from the fear of death impact our lives today?*

## **Main Idea (Part 2)**

### **He was raised on the third day (v.4)**

The wonderful thing is that death could not hold Jesus. God raised him from the dead. His resurrection is not just symbolic or figurative – it's an historical fact. Death was defeated.

Jesus is alive. He sees us, he hears us, he strengthens, and gives us abundant life today (John 10:10). Not only that, he gives us eternal life so that we can enjoy his presence forever.

*Why is this of first importance? How does knowing Jesus is alive give you hope for the future?*

## **Main Idea (Part 3)**

### **He appeared to his disciples and others (vs.5-8)**

The same day he was resurrected, Jesus appeared to his disciples. In the New Testament there are multiple records of Jesus presenting himself alive to his followers. As he did so, he told them to tell others he is alive and to also teach them to be his disciples.

They became the first witnesses of the most important story of history. Through them, more people became Jesus' followers. We, too, are part of the on-going story and can be his witnesses to others.

*Why is this of first importance? What motivated the disciples to be witnesses of his resurrection? How are you also called to be a part of his story?*

## **Main Idea (Part 4)**

### **According to the Scriptures**

In the passage we studied, Paul twice says 'according to the Scripture' (in verses 3 and 4).

This is an important detail. It shows us that the whole story of the Bible points to the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God revealed his plan for salvation throughout the Old Testament, through the story of Israel, and the words of the prophets, all of which pointed to the coming saviour who would establish his kingdom.

## **Practice Together Now**

### **Thank God for all that the cross and the resurrection of Jesus mean for us**

You can use these words:

- Thank you, Lord, that I am forgiven because you died on the cross for my sin.
- Thank you, Lord, that you paid the wages of death and I am free from my debt of sin.
- Thank you, Lord, that you overcame death through your resurrection, and that I can now have eternal life.

- Thank you, Lord, that you are alive today, and I can be a witness of your resurrection.

The cross and resurrection show the passage from death to life - where hopelessness turns to hopefulness according to the promises of God.

Where are you each now experiencing hopelessness? Consider your family life, work life or spiritual life? Where do you need a resurrection? Pray for the resurrection power of Jesus to come into your situation.

### **Review your Practice Daily**

- Start each day thanking God for the most important thing:
  - Pray again the prayers from this step.
  - Sing a song of worship to the Lord.
  - Think of creative ways you can express your gratitude to him.
- Live free from shame. If there is a particular sin that haunts you, confess it to Jesus, receive his forgiveness, and thank him that he finished your shame over that sin with his death.
  - Read Romans 5:8 aloud - “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (NIV)
- Whatever you noted as a place of hopelessness in your life, pray that God would infuse it with his life.
- Refresh your memory of John 3:16.