



THE EVIDENCE

PROOFS OF THE RESURRECTION

GOAL

The goal of *The Evidence* is for teens to understand that belief that Jesus existed and was raised from the dead is rational due to reasonable, historical evidence and eyewitness accounts.

KEY CONCEPTS

- The story of Jesus is not a myth or false hope that we hold onto but, rather, a historical, verified event.
- In the face of doubt, we should ask questions and honestly seek answers about the miraculous nature of the Resurrection.
- Though we may have all of the evidence of the Resurrection — which St. Peter had — it takes faith to honestly believe as St. John did.

KEY TERMS:

Involuntary Doubt, Myth, Resurrection, Voluntary Doubt

SCRIPTURE:

Mark 9:24; Luke 17:5; John 20:6, 8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

CATECHISM:

305, 639-646, 2088

ABOUT THIS LIFE NIGHT

The Gather engages teens in the first of four escape room challenges. The Proclaim breaks down the evidence of the Resurrection and explains why belief in Resurrection is rational. The Break leads teens in a discussion, comparing the reactions of Sts. Peter and John to the Resurrection. The Send guides teens through a scriptural reflection of Sts. Peter and John's experience.

ENVIRONMENT

As a standard environment for this series, dim the lights for the start of the Life Night. Place multiple bookshelves at the front of the room and fill them with books. Add a pair of reading chairs and a lamp on a rug, creating a backdrop that resembles a study.

Set up a space for the teens to gather for the Proclaim. Project *The Evidence* environment image and encourage the teens to solve the puzzle found in the image. The Environment image and Environment Puzzle Key handout can be found on the *January 2020 Life Teen USB* and online at lifeteen.com under Life Support: *January 2020*.

For this Life Night, instruct the Core Team to dress as their favorite detective (e.g., Sherlock Holmes, Nancy Drew, Batman, Scooby-Doo). Fill a box with "evidence" of the Resurrection and hide the box in the main meeting space. Consider placing a Bible, historical documents, and eyewitness accounts of the apostles and early Church disciples in the box. Partially write the name of the location of the box on each of the four clues, which can be found in the Gather. For example, if the box is hidden under a table, write "T" on one clue, "A" on another clue, "BL" on the third clue, and "E" on the final clue. Hide the clues (rocks, photos or statues of angels, and pieces of cloth) in the main meeting space.

LIFE NIGHT: THE EVIDENCE

GATHER

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 min)

Gather the teens in the main meeting space. Welcome them to the Life Night, introduce any teens or Core Members who are attending for the first time, and begin in prayer.

Escape Room I (15 min)

Prior to the Life Night, set up the main meeting space for the escape room, as suggested in the *Environment*. Inform the teens that their goal is to find a box that contains clues of what the series will be about.

Divide the teens into small groups of six to eight with one Core Member in each group; these will be their small groups for the remainder of the series. Inform the teens that they must complete four challenges, each of which draw from Scripture. Give each small group a Bible and project the following: Luke 24:2-3, Matthew 28:5-6, John 20:6-8, and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. Explain that the four verses lead to clues that will help the teens find the location of the box. Once the teens unscramble the letters and decipher the word, they will be able to find the box. The first small group to discover the box receives a prize.

- Challenge 1: Luke 24:2-3 — After reading this verse, the teens search for a rock in the main meeting space, which reveals part of the location of the box.
- Challenge 2: Matthew 28:5-6 — After reading this verse, the teens search for an image or statue of an angel in the main meeting space, which reveals part of the location of the box.

- Challenge 3: John 20:6-8 — After reading this verse, the teens search for a cloth in the main meeting space, which reveals part of the location of the box.
- Challenge 4: 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 — Prior to the Life Night, place a sticky note under this verse in each of the Bibles the small groups will be using. After reading this verse, the teens discover the final part of the location of the box and retrieve the box.

PROCLAIM

“The Evidence” Teaching (10 min)

The *Proclaim Outline* and *Proclaim Details* can be found on pages 18 to 27.

BREAK

6th grade:

- What is the paschal mystery?
 - Name given to God’s plan of saving humanity in Christ Jesus
 - At mass, we celebrate the Paschal Mystery since it is so important for our faith.
 - There is one sacrifice of Jesus for His church.

7th grade:

- The Paschal Mystery reveals that God can bring good out of difficult situations. Can you share a time this has happened to you?
- Death enters the world due to Original Sin but Jesus conquers death so that we may have eternal life.
- We share in the grace of Jesus which is available to us because of the Paschal Mystery.

8th grade:

- The suffering of Jesus helps us to endure challenges in our

own life. How have you experienced this?

- The Paschal Mystery was God's chosen way for humanity to be able to experience grace, allowing us to share in His divine life.

Peter and John (25 min)

Divide the teens into their *Eyewitness* small groups. Using the *Peter and John* handout, which can be found on the *January 2020 Life Teen USB* and online at lifeteen.com under Life Support: *January 2020*, lead the teens through an Ignatian meditation on John 20:1-9. After the meditation, use the following questions to facilitate a discussion:

- When you imagined yourself in the story, were you more like Peter or John? How so?
- What are the positive aspects of Peter's response to the Resurrection? What are the positive aspects of John's response to the Resurrection?
- How do both Peter and John serve as examples of a response to the Resurrection?
- What can we draw from Peter and John's responses to the Resurrection and apply to our lives?
- Do you believe in the Resurrection? Why or why not?



THE EVIDENCE

KEY TERMS

Involuntary Doubt: The hesitation in believing and the difficulty in overcoming objections connected with the faith.

Myth: A legendary story that depicts a person or event and serves to explain a practice, rite, or phenomenon of nature.

Resurrection: The bodily rising of Jesus from the dead on the third day after His death on the cross and burial in the tomb.

Voluntary Doubt: The refusal to believe or hold as true what God has revealed and the Church proposes for belief.

MYTH BUSTER

- *Briefly share a story about your favorite myth, or ask the teens to think about their favorite myth and invite one or two teens to share with the large group.*
- A myth is a legendary story that depicts a person or event and serves to explain a practice, rite, or phenomenon of nature.
- Some people may be inclined to perceive Jesus' story as a myth — historical evidence shows us that it is a rational belief that is rooted in verified, historical text.

HISTORICALLY VERIFIED

- Outside of Scripture, there are several instances where a historical person referred to as the Christ is mentioned.

- A Roman historian named Tacitus wrote about Christ while mentioning Emperor Nero blaming Christians for a fire of Rome in A.D. 64.
- There is also references to Jesus from the writings of a first-century Jewish historian named Josephus.
- The letters of the Roman governor, Pliny the Younger, to Emperor Trajan around A.D. 112 mention Jesus.
- The Babylonian Talmud, a collection of Jewish rabbinical writings, refers to Jesus, as well.
- In these documents, we learn that Jesus was considered a wise, powerful, and respected teacher who performed miracles and was crucified. We also learn that His followers believed that He rose from the dead and was God.
- It is also important to recognize that the New Testament is historically reliable because it passes the tests of historicity that historians put ancient texts through.
- As Christians, we view the Bible as more than documentation and writings about God. We reverence it as God's Word that is living and active.
- *Project and read Hebrews 4:12.*

CHRISTIANITY AND MARTYRDOM

- We can look at the rapid growth of Christianity, named because of their belief in Jesus Christ, and the willingness of Christians to die for their faith as evidence.
- The first Christians held tightly to the belief that Jesus was God because He died and rose for them.
- In Scripture, Jesus did not leave His disciples with a sense of ambiguity toward His Resurrection.
- Jesus physically appeared to His disciples after His death, and this experience had a powerful effect on them.
- Jesus' miraculous appearances to the first disciples made them the bedrock of His Kingdom on Earth.



THE EVIDENCE

TEACHING

MYTH BUSTER

Briefly share a story about your favorite myth, or ask the teens to think about their favorite myth and invite one or two teens to share with the large group.

A myth is a legendary story that depicts a person or event and serves to explain a practice, rite, or phenomenon of nature. There have been several myths throughout the history of the world, like Hercules in ancient Greece and the Kraken in the age of piracy. Each of these myths reveal something about the society from which they originated, and people generally understand them to be no more than tall tales and fables.

Some people may be inclined to perceive the story of Jesus as a myth and reject Christianity as a consequence. Jesus, a Jewish man, was born of a virgin, claimed to be God, and performed many miracles like healing the sick, raising the dead, and controlling nature. He was eventually seen as a threat by His people, so they had him crucified, but He rose from the dead three days later. He then sent out His followers to start a Church before ascending into heaven. If we take a moment to really hear the story of Jesus, it can seem wild and mythical.

However, there are several proofs that show us that the story of Jesus is not a myth; it is a rational belief that is rooted in verified, historical text. While the details about Jesus and His life are primarily told to us through Scripture, we can also look to non-scriptural evidence to see that

it is reasonable to believe that Jesus existed and is who Scripture says He is.

HISTORICALLY VERIFIED

Outside of Scripture, there are several instances where a historical person referred to as the Christ is mentioned. In A.D. 64, a fire destroyed two-thirds of Rome. Emperor Nero blamed Christians. A Roman historian named Tacitus wrote about this event and a man named the Christ, saying, "Nero fastened the guilt ... on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of ... Pontius Pilatus" (Annals 15.44). There is also references to Jesus from the writings of a first-century Jewish historian named Josephus and the letters of the Roman governor, Pliny the Younger, to Emperor Trajan around A.D. 112. The Babylonian Talmud, a collection of Jewish rabbinical writings, refers to Jesus, as well. Between all of these references, we learn that Jesus was considered a wise, powerful, and respected teacher who performed miracles and was crucified. We also learn that His followers believed that He rose from the dead and was God.

While these texts can offer us historical evidence, it is also important to recognize that the New Testament is historically reliable. Historians have tests that help determine the historicity, and the New Testament passes these tests relatively better than other ancient texts that are also considered historical truth. As Christians, we view the Bible as more than documentation and writings about God. We reverence it as God's Word that is living and active.

Hebrews 4:12

CHRISTIANITY AND MARTYRDOM

Not only can we look to these writings about Jesus as evidence, we can look at the rapid growth of Christianity,

named because of their belief in Jesus, and the willingness of Christians to die for their faith, as well. A second century Greek named Lucian said of the early Christians in a satire: “The Christians ... worship a man to this day — the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. ... [It] was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the sage, and live after his laws” (The Passing of Peregrine).

The first Christians held tightly to the belief that Jesus was God because He died and rose for them. In Scripture, we read that Jesus did not leave His disciples with a sense of ambiguity toward His Resurrection. Instead, He made Himself known to them through His very presence. Jesus physically appeared to His disciples after His death. They were able to see Him, speak with Him, and even touch Him.

Luke 24:37, 24:39

Seeing the risen Jesus had a powerful effect on the apostles. Moreover, it was because of Peter’s palpable witness that the community of believers who did not experience Jesus in the flesh were still able to believe. The Gospel of Luke describes the secondhand witnesses as being able to confidently proclaim that the “Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon”.

CCC 641, Luke 24:34

If only a few people saw the resurrected Jesus, we may still be skeptical of the Resurrection — that is not the case. Saint Paul tells us that more than 500 people saw the resurrected Jesus at one time. These 500 people were willing to follow Christ, even as Roman authorities began torturing and putting to death those who were practicing Christianity. It is highly unlikely that a community of

people were willing to give their lives for something they did not know to be true.

CCC 642, 1 Corinthians 15:6

Jesus’ miraculous appearances to the first disciples made them the bedrock of His Kingdom on Earth. They continued to tell people about this good news, and those individuals came to believe and even die for the faith. While we may still tell mythical stories of ancient figures, we would be hard-pressed to find a person who is willing to give up their life for a myth. It is reasonable to believe that the conviction of Christians is not based on a myth or story; it is based on an authentic experience with the true, living God.

Acts 2:38-41

FAITH AND DOUBT

The Resurrection of Jesus is not a myth or false hope we hold onto but, rather, a historical, verified event. It is through the uncompromising belief of the early Church that we have continued reason to believe that Jesus lived, died, and rose from the dead.

However, we must come to understand that, while we may have historical evidence and reasonable proof of the story of Jesus, it also requires faith to establish a personal relationship with Him. This struggle is understandable, but we should not lose hope, for even the apostles had doubts before they saw Jesus’ resurrected body.

John 2:18-22

While the apostles may not have understood that Jesus’ Resurrection would be literal, it was easy for them to make the connection upon seeing the condition of the tomb. This was especially true for John, who “saw and

believed" (John 20:8). The same cannot be said for Peter, though. The Gospel of Luke tells us that Peter left the tomb "wondering at what had happened".

Luke 24:12

Peter had the evidence needed to believe in Christ's Resurrection — the empty tomb, the folded burial cloth, the proclamation from Jesus — yet he could not come to fully believe. When he left the grave, Peter was trying to find an explanation for all he had seen and struggled to believe that Jesus rose from the dead. Peter struggled because he never experienced anything like this.

Peter fell into what the Church calls "involuntary doubt." This occurs when one hesitates in believing and has difficulty overcoming objections connected with the faith. If deliberately cultivated, involuntary doubt can lead to spiritual blindness, which means we have to seek answers to our doubts.

The opposite of involuntary doubt is voluntary doubt. This type of doubt occurs when one refuses to believe what God has explicitly revealed. If Peter had seen the risen Jesus and then denied Him, Peter would have been in a state of grave sin because he would have rejected everything that was made known to him.

CCC 2088

There are many instances in our lives where we may be able to pinpoint an experience of involuntary and/or voluntary doubt. However, in the face of uncertainty, we need to ask questions and honestly seek answers about our faith and — more specifically — the miraculous nature of the Resurrection.

It is not enough to identify a list of teachings that one finds hard to believe and leave it at that. Our faith

deserves more. Faith, no matter how strong, should demand curiosity and growth. The act of believing can and should employ our reason and logic, and we should grow in understanding of (although not fully) the many mysteries of our faith as we grow in knowledge. In order to not lose faith, we have to continue to find nourishment.

CCC 162

If we still find it difficult to believe in the Resurrection, we should continue to ask questions and do research. More importantly, we can pray for faith. The Lord provides us with all we need, all we have to do is ask, just as the apostles did, "Lord, increase our faith".

Luke 17:5

Notes: _____
