

GOD'S INVITATION:

How to Become a Christian

“What it Takes to Get it Right”

The Eighth Movement – Reality of the Resurrection – Luke 24:36-53

Here's a poem by Edgar A. Guest to get us started. It's called
“Yesterday.”

(Just Folks by Edgar A. Guest)

I've trod the links with many a man,
And played him club for club;
'Tis scarce a year since I began
And I am still a dub.
But this I've noticed as we strayed
Along the bunkered way.
No one with me has ever played
As he did yesterday.

It makes no difference what the drive,
Together as we walk,
Till we up to the ball arrive,
I get the same old talk:
“Today there's something wrong with me,
Just what I cannot say.

Would you believe I got a three
For this hole—yesterday?”

I see them top and slice a shot,
And fail to follow through,
And with their brassies plough the lot,
The very way I do.
To six and seven their figures run,
And then they sadly say:
“I neither dubbed nor fozzled one
When I played—yesterday.”

I have no yesterdays to count,
No good work to recall;
Each morning sees hope proudly mount,
Each evening sees it fall.
And in the locker room at night,
When men discuss their play,
I hear them and I wish I might
Have seen them—yesterday.

O, dear old yesterday! What store
Of joys for men you hold!
I'm sure there is no day that's more
Remembered or extolled.
I'm off my task myself a bit,
My mind has run astray;
I think, perhaps, I should have writ
These verses—yesterday.
(source unknown)

Here's a little story that fits here:

The Bishop gave up golfing during Lent. But, the sun came out on Saturday before Easter and he couldn't resist the temptation to "hit a practice shot." Soon he was half way around the course, playing by himself. A little Angel noticed him and said to the Lord, "Hey, look down there at [that] Bishop. He promised to give up golf during Lent and he broke his vow. You should punish him."

"You are right," the Lord said, "I'll do it. Watch me."

While the little Angel looked on, the Bishop teed off on a 450 yard dogleg and made a hole-in-one.

"Excuse me, Lord," the little Angel said, "But, do you call that punishment?"

"I certainly do," the Lord said, "The Bishop has just made the greatest shot in the history of golf—and he can't tell anybody about it."

(source unknown)

Luke 24:36-53 is what we've called "The Reality of the Resurrection."

It's necessary to set the stage. Peter has read the first five verses with the visit of the angelic messengers to the women at the empty tomb when they said, "He is not here, but He has risen." (ref. Matthew 28:6)

Following that in chapter 24, verse 12 the Lord visits with Peter privately. Then it's with two disciples on the Road to

Emmaus in verses 13-32.

As they're walking along, they invite the Lord—they don't know that's who He is—to have a meal with them. And when He begins to break bread they recognize who He is and instantly He disappears. Following this these two men are so ecstatic that they race all the way back to Jerusalem to tell the eleven remaining disciples what had happened.

They have just gotten there and they're sharing the joy of this experience. The disciples have nothing to point to except the trip to the empty tomb by Peter and John and all of these reports. And so they're all consumed in this, and all of a sudden the proof takes place. Jesus appears to them. Pick up at verse 36 and see His presence with them.

v. 36 And while they were saying these things, He Himself stood in their midst.

“And while they were saying these things, He Himself stood in their midst.”

The last time they saw the Lord was Thursday night—that was 72 hours ago and it probably seems like an eternity to them because of all the traumatic things that had taken place.

John records that when He stood before them He said, “Peace be still” or “Peace be unto you.” (ref. John 20:19)

The coming of Christ here is very sudden and it's very silent.

There are no doors that open. He just all of a sudden appears with them.

That's exactly what's going to happen when Jesus Christ comes back again. It's going to be instantaneous, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye He's going to appear. The world in its cynicism and its unbelief does not recognize that great truth of Scripture, but it is going to happen just like this. In a moment, there He'll be, appearing among us.

Now imagine what it would be like if Jesus Christ walked in right now. It would create a horrendous paradox in our life wouldn't it? Because many of us are living by the sophisticated philosophy that Jesus died and that's it, because that's humanity. And this whole business about Easter and the Resurrection is something nice to be handed down to people to think about. But really to have it be something real and genuine and wonderful, and the fact that He's alive today and waiting to come back, is something that's a little bit tough and far-fetched. Right?

Having those kind of thoughts in our mind is exactly the way these men felt. The presence of Christ created a paradox and it's in the next verse.

v. 37 But having become terrified and afraid, they were thinking that they were seeing a spirit.

“But having become terrified and afraid, they were thinking that they were seeing a spirit.”

No one's ever had a resurrection. No one's ever seen anyone who has come back from the grave. So to prove the reality of the Resurrection, we only need to look at the human response. It's not covered up, it's not phony. It's just exactly the way we are. It's a conflict between what we think and what we see. So now some choices have to be made because a mind just cannot grasp a resurrection.

The moment that He appeared in their presence it became almost like a wax museum. When we walk through a wax museum and we see all these faces, they look so much alive but they're all standing there like corpses and we look at all of them—but this one spoke.

These two fellas who are telling their story all of a sudden just stopped silent. They're scared. They're probably holding their breath. They're standing stone still.

Some of them are thinking inside, "Where in the world did He come from?" And there is sudden fear because we can't comprehend something as wonderful as this.

For instance, in Mark 4 when they're out on the stormy Sea of Galilee Peter comes up and says, "Don't you care that we're perishing while you're laying there asleep in the boat?" And the waves are coming in the boat. And the Lord just stands up and says, "Peace be still."

Come off a ten foot wave on a glassy sea, it's going to impress

us. And their question is, “Who is this that even the winds and the waves would obey His voice?”

And in Mark chapter 6 we have exactly the same thing. They’re out on the sea and all of a sudden this moving Spirit comes toward them. And that’s the Lord. He said, “It’s I, be not afraid.” (ref. Mark 6:50)

“I never had any problem walking across the water to you,” as He comes to the boat and they recognize who He is. At this point in what we’re looking at, these men are described as FIGHTINGS and FEARS within and without.

They have a horrible tension in their mind, creating an Excedrin headache in a sense. What is it? This is their initial response to the Resurrection.

v. 38 And He said to them: “Why are you troubled and why are doubts arising in your hearts?”

“And He said to them: ‘Why are you troubled and why are doubts arising in your hearts?’”

He has an advantage.

Hebrews 4:13

...all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

“Man looks on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart.” (ref. 1 Samuel 16:7)

Right? And He knows what we’re thinking right now. And the neat thing is even though He knows what we’re thinking right now—which might not be very good—He loves us still and He thinks we’re pretty special. He would really long to have a relationship with us and He’s created everything necessary for that relationship. It’s a matter of us doing something about it.

“And He said to them”—TWO QUESTIONS. He just confronts them.

1. “What are the doubts?”
2. “Why are y’all troubled?”

“What are the doubts and the troubles about My plan? Why are you concerned about My Person? This is Me! I’ve been resurrected from the dead.”

(Don’t Take My Grief Away by Doug Manning)

Years ago, on Easter, the *New York Times* carried a cartoon on the front page showing a group of caterpillars carrying a cocoon to the cemetery. They were dressed all in black and were in deep mourning. Up in the top of the drawing was a beautiful butterfly. The caption read, “What the caterpillar calls the end, God calls a butterfly.”

(source unknown)

The hope is that somehow in our mind we can grasp the reality of the Resurrection for real! Man it is! And recognize the fact that it happened and what's being recorded here is exactly the way it happened.

Now what do we think the Lord would do coming in, expecting a welcome and instead they're standing there terrified, scared and doubting? Anybody would probably say, "Well you guys, if you don't want to believe, forget it! Just go do your thing. That's alright. You don't have to believe it if you don't want!"

The Lord doesn't do that. The very reason that we're here is because God loves us and He gave us the ability and the gift of life. And that's something to be very thankful for. We don't control the length of our life and God's going to, one of these days, take us to the house—or put us somewhere else, depending on whether we're ready or not. Ready or not here I come!

And to recognize that fact:

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

And so instead of stopping with His presence and leaving them in their paradox, He turns with perseverance to bring them to belief because He has to. They have to believe this

before they can share it with anybody else.

Look at the next verse—verse 39.

1. THE PROOF—verses 39-43

v. 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; touch me and see, because a spirit is not having flesh and bones even as you are seeing me having.

“See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; touch me and see, because a spirit is not having flesh and bones even as you are seeing me having.”

We can call this:

The handling of the project of trouble and doubt.

And the first thing He does is He holds out His hands and He says, “See my hands? Just a few hours ago they were pierced as they were hanging on the cross. And here’s my feet.”

In other words, “Take a look at this. See it with your eyes and then come and touch Me!”

Why?

“because a spirit”—and He acknowledges a spirit—“is not having flesh and bones even as you are seeing me having.”

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Here's the evidence!

Now isn't it interesting that Thomas, one of the twelve, wasn't there at this first encounter? And those are the very things he wanted. When they came and they told Thomas, "Hey man, you wouldn't believe what you missed"—at that first encounter.

Thomas said, "Forget it. Y'all have been hallucinating. Unless I can put my finger in the prints of the nails of His hand and my hand in His side, I will not, absolutely positively, not believe." (see John 20:25)

Remember the next week when He came and He just held out His hands and Thomas cratered and fell on the floor and said, "My Lord and My God." The evidence was there.

The Lord is hoping in this situation as He brings them to the reality of the Resurrection, that as He moves them along they're going to accept it. Maybe the evidence of seeing the wounds and touching His physical body will do a number so that they will actually come to a moment of belief.

Now notice verse 40 has a strange statement on it.

v. 40 (Some manuscripts add verse 40) And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

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said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.”

It says:

“(Some manuscripts add verse 40)”

Working in the original languages and with manuscripts on the Bible actually tell what the word says and there is a science of evidence for the text.

In the oldest manuscripts this verse does not occur. Now what does that mean? The manuscripts that are the closest to the original—we don’t have the original. We’re about 80-90 years away from the original in some of the earliest text. So we take the oldest manuscript—the oldest manuscript or the ones closest to the original leave out verse 40.

Some guy came along in the later manuscripts and added verse 40. It doesn’t make any difference and we could leave it out or leave it in.

“And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.”

That was obvious. He already invited them to come and take a look at it. Now how did they respond to that?

“Oh wonderful belief! This is Jesus! Yes it is! Sure enough, we’re ready to do whatever You want. We’re total committed to the task.”

Is that the way it happened? No. Look at the next verse.

v. 41 And while they were yet refusing to believe it for joy and were wondering, He said to them: “Are you having anything here to eat?”

“And while they were yet refusing to believe it for joy and were wondering, He said to them: ‘Are you having anything here to eat?’”

He’s taking them on. They’re curious. That curiosity is going to lead to a conviction here in just a minute. They’re going to say, “Hey, this is real. This is Him.” And then watch the steps as they take place.

What’s He saying now? He’s saying, “Well I look in your hearts and I realize you don’t believe it yet. Some of you don’t believe it because it’s such a neat thought. You’re so filled with joy you can’t believe it. You just think it’s too wonderful! And that’s great, but you still don’t believe it. And some of you are wondering, so”:

“He said to them: ‘Are you having here anything to eat?’”

Now why does He say that? Because He’s hungry? No. It’s not because He’s hungry. He wants to show them that Casper the friendly ghost can eat. If they actually think He’s a spirit or a ghost, then He wants to show them that He is more than that! He wants to show them that He is the real person. It’s not

that He has to eat. It's that He's going to show them, by taking food, that He's just like everybody else. And He in fact is the Risen Christ.

So we have the process. He's taking it a step further. "You see it! Touch it! Alright, watch Me eat. I'm going to take some food here unto myself."

Remember that's exactly what happened to those two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Just as He started to break the bread they saw who He was. They recognized Him immediately and then He disappeared.

Imagine how our minds would be like this. It'd be like a big old ping-pong match wouldn't it? It's Jesus—it's a ghost. It's Jesus—it's a ghost. It's Jesus—it's a ghost. Going back and forth in their mind trying to think. This is too good to be true! And the fear and fright that's in their hearts is keeping them from the faith that ought to be there.

"If seeing and touching won't do it, how about watching Me eat?"

And now the curiosity is leading them to the point of becoming convinced.

The whole process for the validity of the reality of the Resurrection is taking place right here because it's critical that these men are definitely convinced that He has risen from the dead.

v. 42 And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish.

“And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish.”

v. 43 And having taken it, He ate it in their presence.

“And having taken it, He ate it in their presence.”

They're coming to a commitment. They saw, they touched, they watched Him eat. And—next—He's going to share the proclamation, number two.

2. THE PROCLAMATION (vv. 44-49)

He's satisfied now that He's given them all that's necessary for them to recognize that He really is alive—this is Jesus, it's a bodily resurrection. He's standing there with them. Now He moves from that to the proclamation which affirms it and He had predicted it.

See the prophecies in verses 44-47?

v. 44 Now He said to them: “These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which have been written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

“Now He said to them: “These are my words which I spoke to

you while I was still with you, that all things which have been written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

First He shows them His wounds, then He speaks to them of His words. He’s saying, “This just didn’t happen. The Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms predicted it. I just want y’all to know that. So it fits into the framework. You actually see Me, now let me tell you how the Word of God predicted it and verifies that fact.”

v. 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

“Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”

The Bible says:

1 Corinthians 2:14

The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.

If this isn’t making sense, we’re in trouble. It’s a serious matter. The Lord realizes that these men with their unaided abilities—their natural abilities—cannot comprehend anything He said in the prophecies. They have to have the Spirit of God. They have to have their mind opened by the Spirit of God to understand it.

And so “He opened their minds” so they can grasp the three things that they need to:

1. He’s going to suffer,
2. He’s going to be raised from the dead, and
3. We must proclaim this message to a lost and dying world.

v. 46 And He said to them: “Thus it has been written that the Christ was to suffer and to rise again from the dead the third day:

“And He said to them: “Thus it has been written that the Christ was to suffer and to rise again from the dead on the third day:”

He tells them:

1. He is “to suffer.”

Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22—Jesus Christ must suffer for the sins of the whole world.

2. He must “rise again from the dead on the third day.”

That’s Psalm 118 and Isaiah 53 and several others that would speak of it.

v. 47 And that there is to be preached in His Name repentance with reference to the forgiveness of sins to all the nations—beginning at Jerusalem.

“And that there is to be preached in His Name repentance with reference to the forgiveness of sins to all the nations—beginning at Jerusalem.”

3. “Once you’re convinced that I have been risen from the dead and that I have suffered for sin, then go proclaim this message of forgiveness to a lost and dying world.”

We need to ask ourselves these questions:

Have we experienced it?

Do we know the forgiveness of Jesus Christ?

His blood makes it possible for the sins of the whole world to be forgiven.

Don Baker wrote a book on depression and he says:

(Depression: Finding Hope and Meaning in Life’s Darkest Shadow by Don Baker & Emery Nester)

God’s forgiveness gives me a position as His child and deals with all of my sin—past, present, and future. If salvation depended upon confessing every sin committed as a believer, no one would qualify! We have all sinned in ways we

either were not aware of or were not concerned about enough to confess individually.

“Payment God does not twice demand
First at my bleeding Surety’s hand
And then again at mine.”
(source unknown)

Paula d’Arcy speaks of the tragic encounter with a young man who could not forgive himself for a deed:

(Where the Wind Begins by Paula d’Arcy)

No amount of kind words, sympathetic gestures, or reassurances had ever convinced him that he could be an okay person again. Within himself he believed that no forgiveness was wide enough to cover his deed.
(source unknown)

The Lord wants to forgive us and cleanse our heart and bring us into right relationship with Himself. To know the joy of the freedom of this kind of relationship where there is no escape clauses, there’s no feelings of apprehension as we come into His presence. But it’s all real.

James Rayburn III in his book *Dance, Children, Dance* tells of his daddy’s experience of a friend who had just died and it describes the way God feels about us. The entry in the diary was for January 31:

(Dance, Children, Dance by James Rayburn III)

Sid went home today. It was quick and quiet at 5 p.m. He was taken away to meet the Savior he loved. Of all the sweet memories I shall carry through life, none will match those of this dearest friend God ever gave me. How Sid loved Jesus. He loved Him because he knew Him. Sid taught me of Jesus and His great love as no other person ever did. He taught me what friendship means. he was my dearest friend and I shall never forget him. He loved me. I wonder why it was so. Sid often told me so sincerely, “Jim, no matter what you ever do, I will love you. No matter what you [ever] say, I will stand by you.” He meant it—what a guy. His last week on earth was the happiest week of my life. God’s wonderful grace shining through Sid made it so. I wanted to love Christ like he did. Sid had such great love for the Savior that he even loved little guys like me like Jesus did.

(source unknown)

He loves us and He cares for us. We’re not a misfit. We might come with all kinds of trauma and things in our life that make us feel awkward and uncomfortable, but God just wants to reach down and pick us out of it and make us into something really special because He loves us. He understands that.

Ron Davis in his book *A Forgiving God in an Unforgiving Word* tells a cute story:

(A Forgiving God in an Unforgiving World by Ron Lee Davis)

A little boy passed a pet [shop] every day on his way home from school. Every day he would stop at the pet store and play with a dozen or so puppies that were kept in a pen in the display window. Finally, he got up enough courage to ask the owner of the pet shop how much one of the puppies would cost. The owner of the shop told him the price and the boy went home and began saving his weekly allowance. He returned a few weeks later with his piggy bank tucked under his arm. Smiling broadly, he lifted his bank onto the counter and broke it open. “It’s all there,” he said joyfully. “So I see,” said the owner, as he began to sort through the nickels, dimes, and quarters on his counter. “There’s the pen, pick out any puppy you like.”

The puppies were yelping, wagging their tails, and crawling all over each other. All but one who sat forlornly in one corner of the pen. The boy reached past all the other puppies, picking up the one lonely puppy in the corner. He brought it to the counter and [he] presented it to the shop owner.

“Oh, you don’t want that one,” said the man.

“Why not?” asked the boy.

“Well, he’s crippled. Just look at his leg. Son, you want a puppy [that] can run and play with you in the park. You don’t want a crippled puppy.”

The little boy set the puppy down on the floor and lifted the cuffs of his pants, revealing a set of braces, reminders of a crippling childhood disease of a few years before.

“Yes, he’s crippled. But I’m crippled too. I thought since we’re both crippled, we could be better friends.”

(source unknown)

Jesus Christ was crippled, clobbered and crucified by sin although He did not indulge in it! Because He loves us and He wants to reach down right now and produce a miracle in our life and become a friend who sticks closer than a brother! He loves us.

John 15:13

Greater love hath no man than this, than a man would lay down his life for his friends.

We now come to verse 48 and that's the key to the whole passage.

v. 48 **You are witnesses of these things.**

“You are witnesses of these things.”

He's proven it by seeing, touching, eating food. He turns to them and says, “The prophets predicted it.” But it's our responsibility friend to proclaim it—to be a witness for Him.

How many people this year have come to know Jesus Christ because of our witness as a believer?

Top priority in heaven is not the spiritual growth and advancement that we made, which is wonderful as we become more Christlike. The thing that scores in heaven is how many people were touched with the Gospel of Jesus Christ because

of our witness?

The key to the whole thing in reaching a community for Christ is people in that community who are witnesses for Him. And the minute we come to know Him, we have a responsibility to be a witness for Him. And He says that to them.

“You are witnesses...”

Now, where have we come from?

Curiosity—(QUESTION MARK).

To CONVICTION—“Hey, this is really Him”—(COMMA).

COMMITMENT—(PERIOD)—“I’m ready to throw my life on the line.”

COURAGE—(EXCLAMATION POINT)—“Let’s go for it. I’m willing to be a witness for Him.”

Where are we this Easter Sunday in that sequel of things?

Notice that the Lord never calls us to do anything but He also enables us.

v. 49 And behold! I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

“Behold! I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

What’s He saying? He’s saying when the Holy Spirit comes upon us then we’re going to be a witness.

And we’ve got that all fouled up in the church of Christ today too. We have the Holy Spirit coming upon us for selfish reasons to make us something better than somebody else or to give us some special super power that somebody else doesn’t have.

God gave that Holy Spirit to us to energize us to focus outward and to be a witness to a lost and dying world, not to flaunt it before other saints that we have something that somebody else doesn’t have.

We’re filled with the power of the Spirit, we’re energized with that power to witness to people who need to know Christ. We pray that somehow we’ll catch a vision and have a burden for the lost and helpless to get to them and to reach them effectively for Christ.

Now notice, having given the PROOF and the PROCLAMATION, it’s time to LEAVE.

Verse 50—the place of the DEPARTURE.

v. 50 And He led them out as far as Bethany and having lifted up His hands He blessed them.

“And He led them out as far as Bethany and having lifted up His hands He blessed them.”

Look at that phrase for just a second:

“He blessed them.”

The Lord has never done anything but bless. And what we’re fighting right now, if we don’t know Christ, is His blessing. Isn’t that something?

1. He LIVED to bless us.
2. He DIED to bless us.
3. He was RISEN from the dead to bless us.
4. And He’s COMING BACK again to take us to the greatest blessing of all.

1 Corinthians 2:9

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which the Lord prepared for them that love Him.

Why are we fighting a blessing?

He raised His hands to bless them! Those hands that have healed bodies, that have made blind eyes to see, have risen from the dead. They broke the bread and the fish to feed the multitude. Those hands that have done nothing but bless. And He waits to bless us.

What a fitting conclusion to His ministry. As He stands there with His men, He blesses them.

“I’ve lived to bless you, I’ve died to bless you, and I’m coming back to bless you again.”

Now the PREVIEW—verse 51.

We call this the PREVIEW because in Acts chapter 1 it says this is just a little scenario of what’s going to happen when Christ comes back again.

Acts 1:11

Why are you standing here gazing up into heaven seeing this one go? ... because He’s going to come in like manner.

v. 51 And it came about that while He was blessing them, He parted from them.

“And it came about that while He was blessing them, He parted from them.”

Now what happens? They go back to Jerusalem praising the Lord.

v. 52 And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

“And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”

v. 53 And they were continually in the temple praising God.

“And they were continually in the temple praising God.”

There was “great joy” when He came as the angels announced it and there was “great joy” when He returned.

So many people are leaving this place and going out into eternity. Knowing that, some people are scared to death. They’re not ready. They’re not prepared. They’re not sure. They’re anxious.

What would it take to convince you? We’ve seen the reality of the Resurrection and the disciples. We’ve seen the fact that it’s our responsibility to be a witness, but we can’t be a witness until we have something to witness about. Right?

So many are still at the point of curiosity. They haven’t come to conviction or to commitment yet. Give serious consideration to the Risen Christ. He’s knocking at the door. He’s waiting to come into our life.

Dwight L. Moody's, that dear old evangelist of the late 1800s, physical demise was described by his son:

(The Life of Dwight L. Moody by W. R. Moody)

Suddenly he was heard speaking in slow and measured words. He was saying:

“Earth recedes; Heaven opens before me.” The first impulse was to try to arouse him from what appeared to be a dream. “No, this is no dream, Will,” he replied. “It is beautiful. It is like a trance. If this is death, it is sweet. There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go.”
(source unknown)

Charles Haddon Spurgeon finished his public ministry with the following hymn that he asked the congregation to sing:

(C. H. Spurgeon by Arnold Dallimore)

The sands of time are sinking,
The dawn of heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for,
The fair sweet morn awakes.
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
But dayspring is at hand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.
(source unknown)

Is He speaking to you today, wanting to come into your life?

You can experience that this very day.

We close with a letter that came from a young lady having attended a worship service in southern California:

(God's Extraordinary Power tape by Chuck Swindoll)

All through the early morning hours I sat, wrapped in my trench coat and in my memories of how things used to be and in my longing for them to be that way again. Mid-morning I read through some piled up magazines, newspapers and wished some someone were here to put their arms around me. I could just lean up against them and sit that way for awhile.

I thought I was just depressed and bored, tired of my circumstances, tired of my surrounds. I know now that I was tired of those thoughts—trite, repetitious, unobserved thinking that produced discontentment. I thought about other Sundays and other churches. Perhaps, I thought, church would be a momentary diversion during this day between my night before suspended in this interim. Maybe, I thought, church could put me in contact with the peace that exists alongside anxiety and loneliness.

I am so glad I went. It began in me an unwillingness to let myself remain where I am, and now there is a desire to increase the boundaries of myself, a desire to grow, to improve, to accomplish, to expand. I used to interpret this inner push of meaning that there was some one thing out there I wanted to do or be or have and I had spent so much of my life trying to find "it." And now I know that this energy within me is seeking more than a mate or a profession, more

than even pleasure. It's seeking a new spiritual principle of life that will lift me right out of the old vicious circle of my illusions that kept me living blindfolded to God, bound in ignorance and insensitivity.

I came and sat in the church, your church, huddled in despair and hope—the despair was devastating, the hope, illusory. I agonized over every word you said, and every aspect of my life's story passed [before me].

I just want you to know that when I left I was different. I was changed. I'm a new person. All this week I've been slowly discarding the illusions, [changing] the assumptions, trying out new thoughts and ways of behaving, not only based on what I heard Sunday but on the stuff in the Bible. I'm delighted of the possibility of now being remade, having been reborn. I came to your church with a revolver in my coat and a suicide note. From now on, I will come with only my Bible. Circumstances aren't vastly and wonderfully changed, but I am. [Please] pray for me.

[Love,]

Charity

(source unknown)

Father, You know the hearts of these who sit before You. We pray that they would feel Your warmth, Your love and Your compassion. And we realize it all begins with curiosity. Curiosity which leads to a conviction that Christ is alive and He intercedes in our behalf. And that conviction leads to a commitment. Please Father, may it be Your pleasure to see many make that commitment to receive Jesus Christ as Savior. For it's in the Savior's name we pray. Amen.

GOD'S INVITATION:

How to Become a Christian

“What it Takes to Get it Right”

The Eighth Movement – Reality of the Resurrection – Luke 24:36-53

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v. 36 And while they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst.

v. 37 But having become terrified and afraid, they were thinking that they were seeing a spirit.

v. 38 And He said to them: “Why are you troubled and why are doubts arising in your hearts?”

v. 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; touch me and see, because a spirit is not having flesh and bones even as you are seeing me having.

v. 40 (Some manuscripts add verse 40) And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

v. 41 And while they were yet refusing to believe it for joy and were wondering, He said to them: “Are you having anything here to eat?”

v. 42 And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish.

v. 43 And having taken it, He ate it in their presence.

v. 44 Now He said to them: “These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which have been written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

v. 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

v. 46 And He said to them: “Thus it has been written that the Christ was to suffer and to rise again from the dead the third day:

v. 47 And that there is to be preached in His Name repentance with reference to the forgiveness of sins to all the nations—beginning at Jerusalem.

v. 48 You are witnesses of these things.

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v. 49 And behold! I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

v. 50 And He led them out as far as Bethany and having lifted up His hands He blessed them.

v. 51 And it came about that while He was blessing them, He parted from them.

v. 52 And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

v. 53 And they were continually in the temple praising God.