

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS for the Week of May 25, 2025

The Risen Life *What the Church Has to Say that No One Else can Say*

1. In your opinion, what makes the message of the Gospel so *unique* or *extraordinary*?
What *sets it apart* from every other “message” we commonly hear today?

What continues to surprise you or amaze you the most about Jesus?

2. Christian pastor and author, Steve Bezner, contends that, “The American church, as a whole, struggles in finding its identity completely in Jesus ... We base our behavior more on popular culture than the prophetic words Jesus spoke ... I wonder if the church is declining in the West because the church in the West became too successful – not at discipleship or evangelism but at identifying with Western culture in a way that made the church lose its distinct personality. In our desire to remain relevant we lost our difference, and by extension, we allowed the very thing we hoped to gain to slip away” (*Your Jesus is Too American*). **Do you personally agree or disagree with this assessment?**

Why do you think so many people (and particularly younger people) are dropping out of church these days and looking elsewhere for meaning and purpose?

3. **Acts 5:12-42** gives us a vivid “snapshot” of “the Risen Life” in action in the early church. When you reflect on this passage, what is it about the Gospel that strikes you as “strange,” or “new,” or “different” from what the people were used to seeing and hearing at that time?
4. In **Acts 5:29**, Peter and the other apostles tell the religious authorities who oppose them: “*We must obey God rather than human beings!*” They stayed true to both the message and the methodology of the Gospel, even when it meant being persecuted and flogged for their faith. Do you find sharing your faith to be a *challenge*, or a *joy*, or *both*? Why?

What scares you, or concerns you the most these days about publicly sharing your faith?

5. Back in 1940, Dorothy Sayers, the English novelist and playwright, said: “It is fatal to imagine that everybody knows quite well what Christianity is and needs only a little encouragement to practice it. The brutal fact is that, not one person in a hundred has the faintest notion what the Church teaches about God or man or society or the person of Jesus Christ.” Clearly, her claim is even more evident today in 2025. We simply cannot assume anymore that most people are familiar with the classic tenets and beliefs of the Christian faith. Knowing this, what would you say the Church’s response should be towards unbelievers, skeptics, and seekers today?

6. As God’s Resurrection People, there are at least Five Things the church is called to say (and embody) that no one else can say:

- 1) The Word of God vs. the Wisdom of Man
- 2) The Message of the Cross vs. the Goodness of Man
- 3) The Promise of the Resurrection of the Body vs. the Potential of Man
- 4) The Forgiveness of God vs. the Tolerance of Man
- 5) The Guidance of the Holy Spirit vs. the Plans and Strategies of Man

Which of these five things do you find the most compelling or relevant in your own life right now?

Is there anything else you would add to this list of what the Church has to say that no one else can say?

7. The Holy Spirit constantly works in mysterious and surprising ways. Who would have ever guessed that Gamaliel, an esteemed leader of the Sanhedrin, would be the person to advocate for restraint in judging the apostles, rather than sentencing them to death? **Read Acts 5:34-39.** What strikes you most about this incident?

Have you ever been surprised, or even shocked, by the way God has used a totally unexpected person or circumstance in your life to bring about his will? How so?

8. Theologian N.T. Wright says: “Jesus’ resurrection is the beginning of God’s new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord’s Prayer is all about” (*Surprised by Hope*). What is your response to this in light of our focus on “what the church has to say that no one else can say?” (cf. **Romans 8:18-25**)