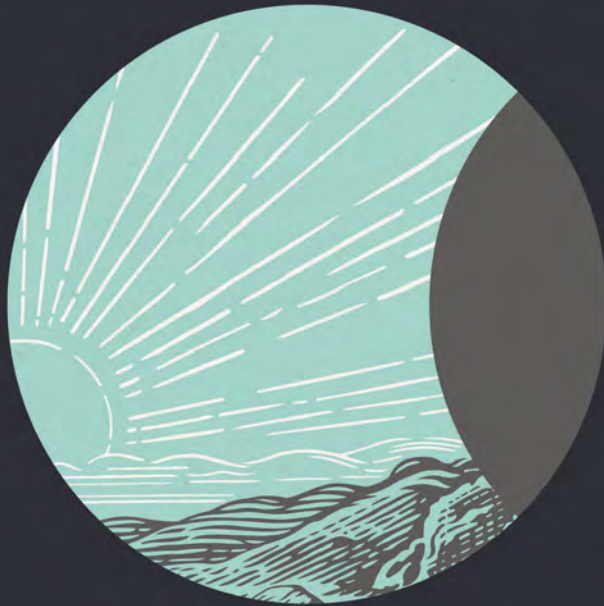


IF THE TOMB IS EMPTY

Why the Resurrection Means Anything Is Possible

STUDY GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

I am delighted that you have chosen to use this study guide that was designed as a companion to my book, *If the Tomb Is Empty*. The lessons, principles, and stories contained in this book trace the story of salvation by highlighting the seven mountains throughout Scripture where God manifests Himself. This study is meant to help you see how the interaction between God and man that happened on each mountain laid the groundwork for the sacrifice of Christ on Mount Calvary, and shows what God revealed about Himself in the process.

The thoughts and questions addressed in the following pages provide an insightful and spiritually rich examination of what the miracle of Christ's resurrection means for all of us. The Son of God was crucified, died, and was buried, and He lay in the tomb for three days—until He walked out shining like the sun. In a culture in which history is erased or rewritten at will, the existence of an empty tomb matters. Why? Because if the tomb is empty, anything is possible. Christ's resurrection means nothing is too hard for our God.

No matter where you find yourself—whether you're a new believer, a seasoned servant of the faith, or maybe you don't know what you are—I'm so thankful you have decided to take this journey with me. I want to start with Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah; then move to Moses and Mount Sinai; to Elijah on Mount Carmel; to Jesus on the Mount of Beatitudes; to Jesus tempted by satan on a very high mountain; to Peter, James, and John with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration; and finally return to the mountain where it all started, Calvary. All the events lead to the amazing

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tomb where Jesus defeated sin, death, and hell. Which changes everything. For everyone who would believe it. Forever.

How you use this study guide will depend on the purpose you have in mind. You can work through it on your own for personal development or as part of a small group study or discussion, say in a care group or book club setting. As you use this study to reflect on your life, I strongly encourage you to read each chapter in *If the Tomb Is Empty* before you complete the exercises in the corresponding chapter in this study guide. Many of the questions are personal, and taking the time to read through the chapters in the book and think through how each question can affect your life will give the study immediate personal application. If you decide to use this study guide in a small group, go through each chapter on your own as preparation before each meeting. This will give your group study depth and make the sessions more productive for all.

Because of the personal nature of this study, if you use this guide in a group setting, remember that courtesy and mutual respect lay the foundation for a healthy group. A small group should be a safe place for all who participate. Some of what will be shared might be highly sensitive in nature, so respect the confidentiality of the person who is sharing. Don't let your conversations leave the small group. A small group is not a place to tell others what they should have done or said or thought, and it's not a place to force opinions on others. Commit yourselves to listening in love to one another, to praying for and supporting one another, to being sensitive to their perspectives, and to showing each participant the grace you would like to receive from others.

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PROLOGUE

1. The most significant history in the history of history occurred on *the* mountain of God. Do a search and find where in Scripture the following events are recorded:

_____ Abraham broke bread with Melchizedek after the battle with the four kings and raised his hand in covenant with God Most High.

_____ Abraham bound his son Isaac, the son of his love, placed him on an altar, and raised a knife to kill him.

_____ David danced as he brought the ark into Jerusalem, singing Psalm 24.

_____ Nathan told David, *You are the man*, and David paid the penalty for his sin with Bathsheba.

_____ Solomon built a temple unequalled in all human history.

_____ King Josiah tore down the high places of idolatry.

_____ The Babylonians led the nation into captivity, leaving Jerusalem in ruins.

_____ Nehemiah rebuilt the broken-down walls, and some returned from captivity.

_____ Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey while crowds shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

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_____ Jesus' sweat turned to blood, and one of His best friends betrayed Him.

_____ Jesus went before a kangaroo court, was struck in the face, was beaten with rods, and had chunks of flesh ripped off His back with a cat-o'-nine-tails.

_____ Jesus was crucified, was hung on a cross, and died.

_____ Jesus rose from the dead, defeating death and hell. The tomb is empty!

_____ Jesus appeared to more than five hundred believers.

_____ Jesus ascended into Heaven.

_____ The Spirit of God was poured out on the day of Pentecost.

_____ On a date known only by the Father, Jesus will return to *the* mountain as He left—to judge the quick and the dead.

2. What did Jesus accomplish on the cross that we could never accomplish in ten thousand lifetimes? As you envision in your mind's eye what He did, how do you feel? What are your immediate thoughts?

3. Jesus' resurrection is the birthplace of eternal hope. In all that transpired in the days following that and through the day of Pentecost, what stands out to you as the most important? In what ways do you see this impacting your life?

Prologue

4. Read 1 Corinthians 15:14–22. Why is the empty tomb such a big deal?

5. If Christ is alive and the tomb is empty, what does this mean for you?

6. Do you live every day of your life as if the tomb is empty...or as though Jesus is still hanging on the cross? Give this some careful thought before you answer.

CHAPTER 1

Mount Moriah—Do You Live as
Though You Can Save Yourself?

1. You read about the two most defining moments of my life—my salvation experience and my reading of Jeremiah 29:11, where God promises that He has a plan for our lives, to give us a hope and a future. Describe the most defining moments of your life.

2. In Genesis 12:1–3, God sovereignly chooses Abraham and makes an everlasting covenant with him. Describe the promises and the terms of the covenant.

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3. What is the one problem with God's covenant with Abraham? Why is the problem not really a problem?

4. Read Genesis 15:6 and James 2:23. What two significant things happened when Abraham put his faith in God?

5. Years passed for Abraham and Sarah with only God's promise of a child but no pregnancy. Have you ever thought God is on a far slower time schedule than you? Describe one of those times. How did you respond?

6. Read Genesis 12:10–20. Describe this incident. What was your immediate response to it? What does this tell you about what makes us righteous in God's sight?

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7. After Abraham's faith was counted to him as righteousness, and ten years after God made the covenant with Abraham, what disastrous step did Abraham and Sarah take? Can you relate to why they did it?

8. What is a works-based righteousness? What are some specific ways that you have seen this principle working in your life?

9. Read Genesis 17:1–18:15. How much time has elapsed since God initially made the covenant with Abraham? What does Abraham's and Sarah's laughter represent? Put yourself in their shoes. Would you laugh as well?

10. "After these things God tested Abraham" (Gen. 22:1). What are "these things," and what is so amazing about it? How does this expose the primary lies of the "prosperity gospel"?

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11. Read Hebrews 5:8; 12:6–8. What do these verses tell you about how God loves you as His child? What is His purpose in disciplining us?

12. Jesus says that His Father is the vinedresser and we are the branches. What is involved with pruning, and why does He do it? Have you ever felt that your life was being pruned? Describe it.

13. What test does God give Abraham? Write out the specific wording. How do you think you would respond to such a test?

14. What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus? If you have surrendered your life to Him, how has that changed the relationship you have to the things you love? When He speaks to you through His Word and Spirit, how do you respond to what He says?

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15. Take some time and ask yourself if you have taken a gift—perhaps your job, your dream, a relationship—and elevated it beyond the Giver of the gift. Are there things in your life that you are afraid to give up or afraid that God might ask you to do?

16. What does Genesis 22:3 tell you about Abraham's character? Do you see yourself responding as he did? Describe one example from your experience and how you responded.

17. Abraham's statement in Genesis 22:5 is a declaration of his faith. Describe what makes this statement so remarkable and the valuable lesson you can take from it.

18. Read Galatians 3:8; Hebrews 11:17–19; and Romans 4. What did Abraham believe by faith that we know by name? Sit with this thought for a while and let the wonder of it sink in.

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19. Describe how Abraham demonstrates what God the Father did in sending Jesus to die for us.

20. Describe how Isaac demonstrates what Jesus did in going to the cross.

21. Read Genesis 22:10–14. What is the miracle that happens on Mount Moriah? What is the significance of the phrase *on the mountain of the LORD it shall be provided*? What was God showing us about Himself here?

22. What is the messianic prophecy that God speaks to Abraham in Genesis 22:15–18? What can you learn from Abraham's experience to help build your faith?

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23. What is the real point of the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22? How is that reflected so clearly in John 3:16–19?

24. How does the story of Abraham and Isaac tell us to never fear what God might ask us to do or how He might discipline us? Have you recognized that this is true in your life? In what ways do you, and in what ways have you not?

25. Nicodemus was a Pharisee. Why would he have been an expert in Genesis 22?

26. When Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again to see the kingdom of God, why is this expert in the Old Testament completely confounded? How is this a warning to all of us?

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27. With Nicodemus, Jesus uses three biblical illustrations to show him who He is. First, He refers to the story of Moses' lifting up the bronze serpent in the desert. Read John 3:14–15. What is the lesson of the fiery serpent that Nicodemus should have understood?

28. Jesus' second biblical illustration to Nicodemus is the correlation of the first word usage in the Old Testament to His statement "For God so loved the world." What would Nicodemus have immediately known Jesus was stating about Himself?

29. The night that Nicodemus and Jesus met, they were standing on Mount Moriah (we call it Mount Calvary), where Solomon built the temple and where on the Day of Atonement the spotless lamb was slaughtered for the covering of sin year after year. What would Nicodemus have understood that Jesus was saying about Himself?

Mount Moriah—Do You Live as Though You Can Save Yourself?

30. Why must the Father sacrifice His one and only Son for every one of us, no matter how religious we might be? Why must we believe?

31. Why can't God just overlook our sin? When the Scripture says that God "is just and the justifier," what does that mean?

32. There are two ways that sin can be paid or atoned for. What is option number one?

33. What is option number two? Do you fall into the "whoever" category? Explain why.

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34. What is the difference between “believing *that*” and “believing *in*”? Describe an example from your own life.

35. What does believing in Jesus require? What does this mean to you?

36. How does the story of Daisy breaking through the ice and her subsequent rescue graphically tell the story of the gospel?

37. What are you going to do about your past sins that keep you trapped in a prepackaged “got you”? In your own strength and ability, what can you do?

38. What has God in His mercy done for us that we could never do?

Mount Moriah—Do You Live as Though You Can Save Yourself?

39. Accepting Jesus' invitation to believe in Him and come and follow Him is the most important decision you will ever make. If you're ready to admit that you need a savior and that you believe that Christ is that Savior, I invite you to join with me and pray the prayer at the end of this chapter. Take some time and write a prayer of thanks to God for all that He has done for you.
