



It's Empty!

I came across the following touching but true story that so beautifully describes the meaning of resurrection. It was related by Harry Pritchett Jr., and taken from *Leadership* magazine, 1985.

Once upon a time . . . I had a young friend named Philip who was born with Downs Syndrome. He was a pleasant child—happy, it seemed—but increasingly aware of the difference between himself and other children. Philip went to Sunday school at the Methodist church. His teacher, also a friend of mine, taught the third-grade class with Philip and nine other eight-year-old boys and girls.

You know eight-year-olds, and Philip, because of his differences, was not readily accepted. But my teacher friend was creative, and he helped the group of eight-year-olds. They learned, they laughed, they played together. And they really cared about one another, even though eight-year-olds don't say they care about each other out loud. My teacher friend could see it. He knew it. He also knew that Philip was not really a part of that group. Philip did not choose, nor did he want to be different. He just was. And that was just the way things were.

My friend had a marvelous idea for his class the Sunday after Easter last year. You know those things that pantyhose come in - the containers that look like great big eggs - my friend had collected ten of them. The children loved it when he brought them into the room. Each child was to get one. It was a beautiful spring day, and the assignment was for each child to go outside, find a symbol for new life, put it into the egg, and bring it back to the classroom. They would then open and share their new life symbols and surprises one by one.



It was glorious. It was confusing. It was wild. They ran all around the church grounds, gathering their symbols, and returned to the classroom. They put all the eggs on the table, and then the teacher began to open them. All the children stood around the table. He opened one and there was a flower, and they oohed and awed. He opened another, and there was a little butterfly. *"Beautiful,"* the girls all said, since it is hard for eight-year-old boys to say *"beautiful."* He opened another, and there was a rock.

And as third graders will, some laughed, and some said, *"That's crazy! How's a rock supposed to be like new life?"* But the smart little boy who'd found it spoke up: *"That's mine. And I knew all of you would get flowers and buds and leaves and butterflies and stuff like that, so I got a rock because I wanted to be different. And for me, that's new life."* They all laughed.

My teacher friend said something to himself under his breath about the profundity of eight-year-olds and opened the next one. There was nothing there. The other children, as eight-year-olds will, said, *"That's not fair - That's stupid! - Somebody didn't do it right."*

Then my teacher friend felt a tug on his shirt, and he looked down. Philip was standing beside him *"It's mine,"* Philip said, *"It's mine."* And the children said, *"You don't ever do things right, Philip. There's nothing there!"* *"I did so do it,"* Philip said. *"I did do it. It's empty. **The tomb is empty!**"* There was silence, a very full silence.



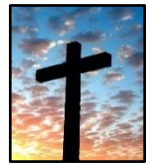
And for you people who don't believe in miracles, I want to tell you that one happened that day last spring. From that time on, it was different. Philip suddenly became a part of that group of eight-year-old children. They took him in. He was set free from the tomb of his differentness.



Philip died last summer. His family had known since the time he was born that he wouldn't live out a full life span. Many other things had been wrong with his tiny body. And so, late last July, with an infection that most normal children could have quickly shrugged off, Philip died. The mystery simply enveloped him. At the funeral, nine eight-year-old children marched up to the altar, not with flowers to cover the stark reality of death. Nine eight-year-olds, with their Sunday school teacher, marched right up to that altar, and laid on it an empty egg—an empty, old, discarded pantyhose egg.”

God himself will provide the lamb . . .

You may remember the story of Abraham and Isaac (circa 2000 BC) and the intended sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah recorded in Genesis 22. As Abraham and Isaac reached the top of the mountain, Isaac pointed out to his father that they had everything necessary for the sacrifice except a lamb. Isaac did not know at that point that God had called his father, Abraham, to sacrifice him! Abraham, with unflinching faith in God, responded: *"God himself will provide the lamb . . ."*



Abraham knew that what God required, God would provide. Instead of sacrificing Isaac, God provided a substitute: *"Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So, Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided." Genesis 22:13, 14 (NIV)*

On that same mountain, 2000 years later, God would offer a Supreme Substitute for mankind's sin and rebellion against Himself. In 30 AD Jesus Christ was put forward to bleed and die on Golgotha. He willingly gave Himself up so that you and I and anyone else, who believes in Him, can have our sins forgiven and receive eternal life!

As Easter approaches, I am reminded that Abraham looked **forward** 2000 years and we look **backward** 2000 years to see that God himself provided the sacrificial Lamb we all desperately needed. I am thankful that once a year we are drawn to look beyond Easter bunnies, chocolate eggs, and jellybeans to the real food of God's magnificent provision for our sin.

In the sobering and stirring words of Andrae Crouch's song, ***I Don't Know Why Jesus Loves Me***: *"Where would I be if Jesus hadn't loved me? Where would I be if He didn't care? Where would I be if He hadn't sacrificed His life. Oh, but I am glad, I'm glad He did!"* The Apostle Paul called this Good News, the Gospel! – Gene Beekman

A Prayer for Resurrection -- by Heather King

Lord, I know you have power over life and death.
I give you the dead in me:
The lost dreams,
The hopelessness,
The lack of vision,
The faith frayed and worn so thin,
The relationships shattered and broken.
You make all things new.
Resurrect my faith.
Renew joy.
Restore hope.
You Conqueror of death and the grave,
Can do all things.
I trust in You.

The 30-Day Experiment

On the 15th Anniversary of Gene going to be with Jesus, I spent the morning reading through the 31 verses in the **Hope cards**. What a precious time saturating my heart with His promises! I had a strong impression from the LORD to memorize all 31 verses, so in obedience to the Lord's Holy Nudge, I'm doing this. I want to have these promises in my heart and on the tip of my tongue so when I'm talking to someone, I can give them **HOPE from God's Word!**

I love this challenge by Dr. Bill Bright which illustrates the life-changing power of the Bible!

Dear Friends:

Have you ever been reluctant to witness to someone because you were afraid, he would argue with you, and you wouldn't know how to answer?

If so, I have good news for you -- you don't have to be frightened by the intellectual-sounding arguments of atheists and agnostics. I want to share with you an effective response to many of the arguments you might hear in a witnessing situation.

One day a young man said to me, "*I'm an atheist. I don't believe there is a God.*" I asked him, "*Greg, are you an honest person? Of course I am,*" he replied.

I said, "*Greg, a scientist goes into the laboratory to do research to perform an experiment without preconceived ideas. He goes with an open mind and considers all truth objectively. Would you be willing to perform an experiment for thirty days, as a matter of intellectual integrity?*"

I described to him what I call the 30-Day experiment. *Read the Bible every day, starting with the Gospel of John, I emphasized. Just one hour a day, for thirty days. And every day, begin your reading with a prayer: "God, if you exist, and if Jesus Christ is your revelation to man and He truly died for my sins, I want to know you personally. Come into my life and be my Savior and Lord."*



Greg agreed to the experiment, and since he had no classes that day, I encouraged him to spend the entire day reading the Gospel of John.

That evening, I was speaking to a group of several hundred students. As I looked out over the crowd, I saw Greg beaming at me with a big smile that could have lit the whole auditorium.

When I finished, he darted through the crowd to meet me. "*I did it,*" he grinned. "*I did what you told me. I read the first, second, third, fourth chapters, then more of John.*"

I'll never forget his next statement: "*I was in the eighth chapter when Jesus stepped out of the pages of the Bible and into my heart.*"

Greg's story is only one of hundreds I could share with you about the effectiveness of "The 30-Day Experiment." Try it.

*Yours for fulfilling the Great Commission each year until our Lord returns,
Bill Bright*



Nothing gives me greater joy than telling others about my precious Savior! I am humbled by the opportunities the Lord gives me to be involved in His harvest field.

What an incredible privilege it was to share with the 100 women who attended the **Mesa Regal Christian Women's Connection luncheon** about the difference that Jesus has made in my life and how they too could know Him. What a delightful and fun group they were!

Above all, I wanted them to know that **Sara Beekman has a great Savior!** I don't know what the Lord chose to do in each life, but I know that *His Word does not return void without accomplishing that for which it was sent forth.* Please join me in praying that the seeds of the Gospel which were sown into their hearts will take root and that the women will desire to let the Lord have His will and His way in their lives.

Upcoming Ministry Opportunities

March 15 – I will have the joy of hosting the **Stoncroft Speaker Appreciation** event in my home. Emily Firnstahl, Stoncroft Consulting Speaker Trainer; and Pam Hage, Stoncroft Regional Speaker Trainer, will be leading our time together as we celebrate all the Lord has done in this wonderful ministry and for the privilege to be part of it as speakers.

April 20 – Evangelistic Training at Meadview Baptist Church. I am thrilled to be able to challenge, equip, and encourage others to share their faith with people who desperately need Jesus! The four sessions I will be leading are listed below. These sessions also include practical applications.

Let your light shine: People aren't attracted by our methods; they are attracted by our lives. Is your walk with Jesus fresh and vibrant and if not, what are the reasons? Individual time will be given to examining their personal walk with the Lord.

Your Hope Story: Do they know the story God has written on the tablet of your heart? One of the most profound stories we can share is how we came to Christ. Opportunity given to create an outline for personal testimony and ways God can use it.

Speaking up for Jesus: *"We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."* Acts 4:20 Discovering ways to direct conversations toward matters of faith using questions and tracts for those divine appointments. Finding JOY in doing that!

Be encouraged! God can use you! *The harvest is plentiful, and the observers are many.* Challenge to move from just being "observers" to being "actively and passionately" involved in His Harvest Field! *"Ten Most Wanted List"* as a reminder to pray.

If you are interested in scheduling an evangelistic training in your church and/or at another event, please contact me: sara@stoptoprayer.org or call our office: 602-992-8808.

May we experience the power of the resurrection in our lives each and every day . . . because the tomb is empty!!

Christ is Risen! God kept His promise,

Sara

