



**A Connect Group Discussion Guide  
Book Review “On Death” by Tim Keller  
and Study Questions on 1 Corinthians 15**

**Cover Art by Merrill Corney**

**Prepared by Paul Reed**

**Book Review by Paul Reed**

## **What is the book about**

Tim writes about death as a tectonic change in our life that we all face and prompts us to ask age old questions

- Am I living for things that matter?
- Will I have what it takes to face this new life stage?
- Do I have a real relationship with God?

## **Purpose**

To explain the Christian foundations for the life stage of death and provide guidance, comfort, wisdom and above all help to find and know God during this stage of life.

## **Who wrote the Book**

Dr Timothy Keller started Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York which grew to 5,500 regular attendees and help start 300 or more new churches around the world. He is well known respected theologian and author of over 100 books.

## **What did you find the most helpful?**

The opening chapter discusses **“the Fear of Death”** and the fact we seem far less prepared for it than our ancestors. Keller offers 4 reasons for this fear in the context of living in secular modern western cultures.

1. The blessing of modern medicine keeps us alive longer and as a result we experience fewer deaths in our daily lives compared to older times

2. The decline of religious life that helped people cope with guilt and death and in the case of Christianity to deal with the consequences of divine judgement through the gospel of grace, by repentance and receiving God's grace, and His forgiveness.
3. The rise of the pursuit of 'this world only', its happiness, comfort, achievement and at best a love relationship within the confines of our earthly time frame
4. The redefining of death as nonexistence and no big deal because you don't feel or know anything anymore. It is the circle of life.

Keller rallies against the fear of death and turns to **Our Champion** Jesus our Savior who rose from the dead, pardons us from our sin, covers us with love and offers to us by faith, a resurrected life. Keller provides a rich array of verses that support this claim. He extols that this life is temporary except for God's love which is secure and cannot be lost. Everything will be taken away except this.

In view of this victory, should we therefore grieve the death of a loved one? In the section **Rupture of Death**, Keller says yes, we should, but not like those without **hope**. He outlines the power of the unique hope Christians have when facing our own or a fellow Christian's death.

## **Personal Hope**

Keller declares that the future of those who die in Christ is deeply personal, providing continuity with us and our past. It is a world of infinite love: together with Jesus and people you have lost; in perfect love relationships that goes on forever!

## **Material Hope**

In the fully realized Kingdom of God when Christ returns, Christians will get new bodies, like the resurrected Jesus who insisted he was flesh and bones. He ate and taught with his disciples as proof. Keller states we will walk, eat, hug and love, sing with joy, experience excitement, satisfaction, beauty and power we cannot now imagine. There will be a new material world with no suffering, tears, disease, evil, injustice and death.

## **Beatific Hope**

We will be with the Lord Jesus forever, in perfect communion, face to face in His full glory, transformed like Him, fully known and fully loved. For now, we have a foretaste of His presence by faith, His word and the Holy Spirit increasingly pouring Gods love into our hearts.

## **Assured Hope**

Keller writes we not only know about the future world of love, the vision of God and a renewed Universe, we are assured that these astounding things are ours. We do not anxiously wonder if we have been good enough to be with God when we die. We live with deep assurance of all these things.

Considering this unequalled Christian hope, Tim believes we can (at funerals!) laugh and sing in anticipation of the return of Jesus.

At the end of the chapter Tim offers a concluding prayer about this unique power of Christians hope.

### **If you are facing your own death or the death of a loved one**

The Appendix offers very helpful and comforting biblical promises for believers to daily meditate over the course of a week.

### **Q: Is this book worth recommending and who will benefit the most by reading it?**

**A: Yes.** In a culture that often refuses to acknowledge death, this book brings to light Christian tradition of facing death and celebrating what comes after. Tim offers throughout the book, wise and compassionate insight through lessons embedded in the Bible. It is short but concise book worth reading by Christians and recommending to non-Christian friends dealing with the death of a loved one.

*Peter Corney writes - I recommend Paul Reed's introduction to Tim Kellers book entitled "On Death" and his encouragement to Connects Groups to read and discuss it. You will be challenged and blessed.*

## 1 Corinthians 15: 1-58

### Introduction

*Ask your group to read 1 Corinthians 15 leading up to the next study meeting. They can start to answer the questions to share with others. This can help identify the questions that most challenged the group.*

*As the evidence of the bodily resurrection of Jesus is a central issue to the Christian faith and theology be prepared to meet enough times to help clarify any questions.*

### The Resurrection of Christ

*Q1. What is Paul most concerned about to remind the church at Corinth. (v 1-2)*

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*Q2 Why is Paul so motivated to preach about the resurrection? (v 8)*

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*Q3. Why can we be confident that Christ was raised from the dead? (v 3-8).*

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**The Resurrection of the Dead.**

*Q4. What does Paul say about our natural body dying if some say there is no resurrection? (v12-19).*

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*Q5. What does the resurrection guarantee about our future? (v 20-23)*

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*Q6. When Jesus returns to hand over the Kingdom to God to the Father, what will happen? (v 24-28)*

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**The Resurrection Body**

*Q7. So, what kind of body (v 42-44) will arise from the dead?*

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*Q 8 As Christians how should we view death? (v 54-57)*

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*Q9 What does Paul want us to do between now and our death? (v 58).*

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*Q10. In summing up, why is belief in the bodily resurrection important?*

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## Guidance to Questions

**Q1** Paul's focus in his preaching is the unchanging gospel of salvation. He urges believers to hold firmly to the message they received (v 1-2), warning them not to alter the true gospel for the sake of those who may be at risk of not trusting the saving message. Paul emphasises that the integrity of the gospel is vital for salvation.

**Q2.** Paul's motivation stems from his personal experience with Jesus. Despite his history of persecuting the early church, Paul's encounter with the risen Christ (v 8) after the ascension, confirms for him the reality of Jesus' resurrection. God's saving grace, bestowed upon Paul, leads him to dedicate his whole life to preaching this good news. (v 9-11).

**Q3.** Christ, God's promised all powerful restoring King, is the central subject of the gospel. According to scripture He took our place and died for our sins, that he was buried and truly died and that he was raised from the dead on the third day. (v 3-4)

His resurrection appeared to eyewitnesses including Peter, James and 500 others on 12 other occasions. He is recognised by his disciples, by Paul, Mary Magdalene and many others. (v 5-8)

His resurrection was predicted in the OT (Isaiah 53: 1-12; Psalms 16:10, 49:15; Daniel 12:2 : Hosea 13:14)

As a result, the first Christians were convinced that Jesus did rise from the dead for our sins. His bodily resurrection and evidence about it, are central to the Christian faith and theology.

**Q4.** Our body is perishable subject to change, decay and death, unable to inherit the Kingdom of God; it is dishonoured due to our mortal bodily feelings and passions, it is weak and breaks down and frustrates our earthly visions and plans. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. (v 56)

However, sin that leads to death feels wrong and is not part of God's original creation or his Gospel message. It leaves us facing God's judgement and wrath. It is eternal separation from God – the real sting of physical death. (v55)

**Q5 .**Paul states that those that belong to Jesus will be raised from the dead (v 20-23). Jesus is the first fruits of resurrected eternal life, the first instalment, foreshadowing what will happen for all His people one day.

**Q6.**Everything will change. Christ will destroy all opposition to God. His reign began at his resurrection and will continue until it culminates in the destruction of death – the ultimate enemy of God's purposes- the victorious Son of God will submit himself to the Father who will reign in all creation, and the order of Universe will be restored

**Q7.** Like a sown seed that does not come to life unless it dies (v 36 -38), God gives a new spiritual body fitted for resurrection life. It will be raised as imperishable (eternal); one in glory (perfectly in God's image); one of power (unbreakable); (v 42-45). It will not be flesh and blood like now. This isn't to say it won't be a real physical body. Our bodies will be changed (v52) in the sense they will be immortal. We will bear the likeness and character of the man from heaven.

**Q 8.** We have no need to fear death or to grieve death without hope. Death is something we go through on the way to Christ's new creation, where we will enjoy perfect resurrection life in glorious immortal bodies. The sting of death is defeated. (v 54-57) (Isa 25:8 and Psalm 49:15). Our best days are assuredly ahead of us (Psalm 73:14)

**Q.9** Paul encourages believers to stand firm in the gospel message and not let anything hinder their faith in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus. He calls for wholehearted dedication to living God's way. Firm belief in the doctrine of the resurrection transforms how we live now: not for ourselves or the present moment, but for the future reality, willing to work for God, whose presence we will enjoy in our resurrected bodies. God will give us a new heart and put a new spirit in us (Eze 36:26 and 2 Cor 5:17)

**Q10** In summing up, why is belief in the bodily resurrection important?

- It is proof that God accepted Christ's death in our place for our sins.
- It proves the apostles' teaching is trustworthy – they suffered and even died for the truth of the resurrection.
- It means our faith in forgiveness of sins is correct.
- It guarantees our resurrection and shows the kind of bodies we will have: immortal, glorious and not decaying.
- It means death has no sting, because it is just something that lies between our lives here and lives in eternity.
- It changes the way we live now – working for God as we look forward to the future when God will give us all we need.

## Helpful References

- Mark Dever and Carl Laferton (2022) “Loving Church, 1 Corinthians 10 – 16”, Good Book Co.
- Andrew Wilson (2023) “1 Corinthians - For You”, Good Book Company
- Kristie Berglund (2013) ‘Resurrection: Living as People of the Risen Lord’, Life Guide Bible Studies
- New International Version, Holy Bible (2011) by Biblica Inc.