

IF CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED: HOW TO LIVE LIKE JESUS IS ALIVE

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If my neighborhood was to have an official motto, I'm pretty sure it would sound a little something like this: "Work hard. Play harder."

The North Shore of Sydney, Australia, is not only an incredibly beautiful place to live but an incredibly expensive one as well. Property prices in this part of the world lead the vast majority of locals to work two jobs to service mortgages that would make your eyes water.

But don't be deceived; the North Shore lifestyle isn't just about getting a foot in one of the world's most expensive property markets. It's also about living a certain lifestyle. This means flexible work arrangements to create the ideal work-life balance, endless vacations, dinner parties and weekends away, the latest exercise regimes (Yoga, Pilates, CrossFit, and micro-HIIT) and diets (Keto, Vegan, Paleo, and Intermittent Fasting), all with a common goal of enjoying life as much as possible for as long as is humanly possible.

In fact, my generation (millennial) is plagued by a phenomenon called FOMO: the Fear Of Missing Out. Why? The simple answer is, YOLO: You Only Live Once.

We live in a culture that sees no hope beyond the grave. And if that is true, the only hope for this life is surely to try and enjoy what remains of it as much as you possibly can. To miss out on any opportunity in this life is to sell yourself short in life somehow—to have wasted it.

Salt and Light

Yet here's the truth: even as those who profess to follow Jesus, we can sometimes find ourselves succumbing to the values and worldview of those who live around us. We might trust in Jesus for our future salvation, but on this side of eternity, we want the same work-life balance, the holidays, the good health, the lifestyle, and the property that our neighbors enjoy. I, for one, frequently find myself anxiously examining my bank account or checking the share market, or daydreaming about a vacation up the coast.

It's not that it's wrong to desire homeownership, vacations, or any of the above per se. It's simply that as followers of Jesus, our outlook on life is meant to be completely different from those around us. In the words of

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Jesus, we're meant to be different like salt (Matt. 5:13) and visible like light (Matt. 5:16).

Why? Because Jesus Christ rose again from the dead.

You see, Jesus' resurrection isn't just a complete game-changer for the future; it's also a complete game-changer for the way we live our lives today.

"I Pity the Fool"

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he takes the life-changing implications of the resurrection a step further. If Christ was not raised from the dead, not only is there no forgiveness of sins, but those who have died trusting in Jesus have perished, and our faith is a pointless waste of time (1 Cor. 15:12-18).

Paul says, "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied." (1 Cor. 15:9) In the words of Mr. T, "I pity the fool" who trusts in Jesus Christ if he wasn't raised from the dead.

Knowing with confidence that Jesus Christ is alive and reigning ought to profoundly impact the way we live our lives. Our lives should seem foolish to those around us who have hope only in this life. Our daily priorities and passions only make sense if Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.

How can we live like Jesus is really alive?

1. We live like Jesus is alive when we talk about him.

You can tell a lot about what a person loves by what they talk about. If you listen to me for long enough, you'll quickly learn that I love cricket, coffee, running, my wife Charlotte, and my son Elijah.

What would those who know you best say you love to talk about the most? If you met the Apostle Paul, the answer would be the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Paul says, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Paul had encountered the risen Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9), and his life was radically changed. Paul had witnessed and experienced the power of Jesus first-hand, and as a result, he simply couldn't stop talking about him.

If Jesus is alive, what better news is there with which to encourage a believer? If Jesus is alive, what better message is there with which to love a neighbor? We live like Jesus is alive when we talk about him.

2. We live like Jesus is alive when we hope in him.

In our culture, hope is about optimism and wishful thinking. We say, "I hope it doesn't rain today."

In contrast, the biblical concept of hope is about confidently waiting for a guaranteed future. Specifically, for Christians living on this side of the cross, our hope is in waiting for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the Apostle Peter put it, we have "a living hope" (1 Pet. 1:3), and the Christian is commanded to "set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13).

How would you feel if the Lord Jesus chose to return today? If we're honest, many of us would feel a little bit disappointed. After all, there are some things we'd like to do first. We want to watch our kids grow up, be married, own a home, travel the world, finish college, or have a successful career.

In other words, there are things in this life that we're waiting for because we've set our hearts on them.

According to Paul, if we feel disappointed at the thought of Christ returning, we haven't grasped the significance of what his resurrection means.

Not only will those who trust in Christ receive a glorious new body on that day, but Christ will usher in the new, eternal kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:24–25). In a new heavens and new earth, all of creation will be renewed, all the effects of the fall will be purged, and we will joyously dwell in perfect fellowship with the Triune God who created us to find our deepest delight in him.

“When Christ our life appears, our hope will be complete
Our longings finally rest as we fall at His feet
When Jesus comes to reign, restoring everything
Our tears will turn to tides of praises to our King”¹

If we live like Jesus is alive, we need to ensure that our lives center on waiting for Jesus.

3. We live like Jesus is alive when we persevere.

For many people, 2020 was an incredibly difficult year, and for some, 2021 has continued to bring trials of many kinds. As followers of Jesus, life can be particularly discouraging when our efforts to serve our King don't seem to turn out the way we had hoped.

For instance, you've been boldly seeking to share the gospel with your colleagues at work, and years later, still, no one is responding. The church you love and faithfully serve is still plagued by division and shrinking numerically. You've been trying to point your kids to Jesus their whole lives, only to recently watch one of them walk away from the faith. You've been struggling to care for a chronically ill spouse and have witnessed not only the decline of his or her health but the decline of your marriage as well.

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When times are tough and our faith is tested, it's easy to wonder, "What was the point of all that?" "Was it all a big waste of time?"

Here's a glorious truth. Because Jesus is alive and seated on his heavenly throne, we can persevere with confidence knowing our efforts to serve the Lord are never a waste! "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58).

The reality that Jesus is alive and reigning is no mere point of doctrine. Knowing and serving a risen Savior transforms every aspect of our lives and infuses every moment of our lives with significance and hope. In light of this reality, may we continue to live every day treasuring the risen Christ: talking about him, hoping in him, and persevering by the grace that is found in him alone. Christ has been raised, and we will rise with him.

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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