



# LifeGroup Study

Date: April 16, 2023

Text: Acts 2:14a, 22-32 (33); John 20:19-31

Theme: Reanimated...for deeper purposes

## Belong

Have you ever wondered to yourself if this is all there is? If waking up each day and going about your daily routine really matters to the bigger picture? If you can make a difference in this world? These questions we ask ourselves can drive us crazy when we feel our lives aren't making a difference. Those are the times when life seems to be a hum drum thing. Yet in the midst of all that, when we really start to think about it, there is something that gnaws at us from deep inside that pushes us to find some kind of reason to explain why we are here. When we pay attention to that internal yearning it can start us on a journey to find ourselves and help us understand why we are here.

This week's text will help us on our journey to find purpose and meaning by looking more closely at the source of the longing and drive we have inside. We will find that the source of our yearning to make a difference in the world comes from the One who created us. Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection and breathed on them saying "receive the Holy Spirit," confirming what he had told them earlier that *"the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."* As we begin to listen and connect with the Holy Spirit, we will begin our journey to understand the desire we have to find meaning in our lives, a journey that will guide us to find deeper purposes for our lives.

**Prayer...** Heavenly Father, we long to connect with you more deeply so that we may know the deeper purposes you have for us. Help and guide us to connect to the passions you've placed on our hearts so that we will know how to turn them into actions that allow us to realize the deeper purposes only come from you. Amen.

## Believe

Read John 20:19-31. As the text begins we can only imagine the fear and anguish that must have overwhelmed the disciples, making them wonder what was happening. Was this all there is? Then Jesus appears and reassures them with his words and by showing them his hands and side. He then says to them *"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you"* and breathes on them to receive the Holy Spirit.

- *What did Jesus mean by saying "I'm sending you" and how does it apply to us?*
- *What are your thoughts on the Holy Spirit?*

Of course, Thomas wasn't in the room when Jesus appeared to the disciples; they told him the good news but he had his doubts. When Jesus did appear to Thomas, he skeptically

asked to see Jesus' hands and side to make sure it was really him. When Thomas not only saw the wounds but touch them, he believed.

- *Like Thomas, have you ever had doubts about Jesus?*
- *What do you think will help us "see" Jesus?*
- *What did Jesus mean in verse 29?*
- *What comes to your mind when you hear the words "and that by believing you may have life in his name"?*

Read Acts 2:14, 22-32.

- *Why do you think Peter uses the Prophet Joel's words when talking to the crowd?*
- *What do you think was going through the minds of the people in the crowd?*
- *Why do you think Peter brings up King David's name?*
- *Do you think Peter's words resonate with people today, in what way?*

Once Peter had explained to the crowd who Jesus really was, he went on to explain the strange behavior of the men from Galilee. That, in fact, Jesus, the One who sits at the right hand of God, had received the Holy Spirit from God and it was Jesus who had poured out the Spirit upon them, which is why they were acting strangely.

• *How do Jesus' words "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" from John 20 relate? What does this tell you about our purpose?*

• *How do you think the Holy Spirit helps us find our deeper purpose?*

## Become

Psalms 139 reminds us that God knows each of us before we are born. God knits us together in our mothers' wombs and has already made plans for us. God not only knows us before we are born and has plans for us, he also picks the exact time and place we will be born to give us the best chance to deeply connect to him (Acts 17:25-27). God does this out of the great love God has for us and desires that we experience this love ourselves. God not only wants us to experience God's love for us, God wants us to move outside of ourselves and share that love with others.

It's the Holy Spirit that connects us to the love God has placed within us and guides us so that we may look outside of ourselves when we respond to the world around us. God wants us to share the boundless love God has placed on our hearts so that we may experience and know life more deeply. It's in the sharing of our love through the actions we take that allow us to understand the deeper purposes God has for us. Actions that are motivated from the love we have for God and each other.

**Prayer...** Lord God, thank you for placing passions on our hearts that move us to be active parts in your kingdom. We are eager to turn those passions into actions that help us understand your deeper purposes for us and ask for your help in showing us how we can share the love you've placed on our hearts and turn your deeper purposes for us into reality. Amen.

# Devotionals: DailyWalk on the Rock

Date: April 16, 2023

Text: Acts 2:14a, 22-32 (33); John 20:19-31

Theme: Reanimated...for deeper purposes

## Day 1: Monday, April 17, 2023—Reanimated!

Read John 12:24-25. We know that seeds, dead for even thousands of years, can be “reanimated” by being planted in a nutrient rich environment. This is a wonderful metaphor for what God can do in our lives. Easter isn’t just a historical event, and our resurrection isn’t just future; Jesus is alive in us today, and he longs to make us new, to “reanimate” us, for his purposes. Consider this as you read John 20:19-31 and Acts 2:14a,22-33. What happened that transformed the disciples from fearful men, hidden behind locked doors (*John 20*), into bold witnesses, willing even to die for their faith (*Acts 2*)? Tell Jesus you long to be fully alive in him and for him (*2 Corinthians 5:17*).

## Day 2: Tuesday, April 18, 2023—Peace and Resurrection Life and Power!

What does it mean to be fully alive in Jesus, to have hope, not just for eternity, but also for today? Is it about ease and comfort, or does it mean Jesus is alive in us and is truly Emmanuel (God with us) in the midst of life? Remembering the promise of Matthew 28:20b, read John 20:19-31; listen as Jesus says, “peace (shalom) be with you” (*20:19,21,26*). Perhaps, hearing this, the men recall Jesus’ words spoken just days earlier (*14:16-20, 25-27; 16:33*). How does this peace relate to the resurrection life and power for which Paul prays (*Ephesians 1:17-23; 3:16-21*)? Meditate on Jesus’ offer of his peace, life, and abiding presence, as you make Ephesians 3:16-19 your prayer.

## Day 3: Wednesday, April 19, 2023—Reanimated by the Spirit!

Scripture and tradition teach that most of the eleven who hid behind locked doors (*John 20:19-31*) died as martyrs. What or who transformed these fear-filled men into bold witnesses who loved Jesus more than life itself? What love motivated them to spend their lives telling others about their resurrected Lord? Read Acts 1:4-5,8 and 2:1-6,14a,22-33. Sometimes we seem to forget that the same Spirit, who filled and empowered the eleven, longs to fill and empower us. Read John 7:38-39; Acts 2:37-38; and Ephesians 1:13-14; ask yourself if you have opened your heart to the fullness of all the Spirit longs to do in you. Pray Paul’s prayer for the Colossians (*1:9-14*) for yourself.

## Day 4: Thursday, April 20, 2023—Sought, Saved, Sent

Consider Jesus’ life and love as you meditate on Luke 15:1-7 and 19:10. What is the measure of his love (*2 Corinthians 8:9; Ephesians 5:2; 1 John 3:16*)? Jesus sought us; he saves us (*Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:8-9*); and he sends us (*Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:21*). Do we sometimes live as if we are saved simply to bask in the joy and assurance of our salvation? Have you asked Jesus to whom he is sending you?

Consider that Jesus sent his first followers to ever-widening spheres of outreach (*Acts 1:8*). What is your Jerusalem (the nearest sphere)? Pray Havergal’s lyrics, “O use me, Lord, use even me, just as Thou wilt and when and where...” Go share Jesus’ love!

## Day 5: Friday, April 21, 2023—God’s Purpose: To Love God

We have spoken of life in Christ – abundant life, resurrection life, Spirit-empowered life. Such life does not revolve around us; it is rooted and grounded in God’s love for us, and it is life joyfully lived to bless others and glorify God. But just what does that mean and where does it begin? Meditate on 1 John 4:9-10 and then on Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Mark 12:28-30. Consider that loving God is about commitment and obedience as well as about feelings (*John 14:21,23-24; 15:8-11*). Pray about what it means to love God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength.

## Day 6: Saturday, April 22, 2023—God’s Purpose: To Love One Another (Fellow Believers)

Remember Peter Scholtes’ lyrics, “They’ll know we are Christians by our love.” Are we living that love? What does the testimony of our love (or lack of it) for others in the Body of Christ say to the world, to those who don’t know Jesus? Read John 13:34-35. How much are we to love our fellow believers? Consider that this love is lived out in sacrifice, service, forgiveness, generosity, and kindness (*John 13:12-17; 15:12-13; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-17; and 1 Timothy 6:18*). Pray that the Spirit will reveal to you how you can live this life of love for other believers.

## Day 7: Sunday, April 23, 2023—God’s Purpose: To Love Our Neighbors (Everyone!)

Read John 20:21,30-31 and Acts 2:14a,22-24,32-33. Jesus sent the disciples to testify to his immeasurable love and saving grace. That call is ours also. Consider that we testify not only with words but also with our very lives. Will people want to hear what we say if they don’t see the reflection of Jesus in our lives? Read Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:29-31; and Luke 6:27-36; 10:27-29,36-37. Ask Jesus to whom he is sending you this week. Is there someone to whom the Spirit is moving you to show love/kindness/compassion/grace? Thank God for the Spirit who teaches us what to say and enables us to live lives that point others to Jesus (*John 14:26; Galatians 5:22-23*).