

Igniting the Power of Faith

The Resurrection of Jesus is the power within Easter's celebrations. There is profound reverence and joy in the triumphant rising of Jesus Christ from the dead after His crucifixion, symbolizing victory over sin and death. It is a testament to the divine power of God, illustrating the promise of eternal life for those who believe on Jesus for redemption from sin. It is the tangible moment in which both Christ followers as well as "pre-believers" may take hold of hope incarnate, secure in knowing death is not the end but the shift forward to an everlasting future in heaven with God.

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The Easter season therefore can be a threshold for believers, when faith blossoms like Springtime to grow into a joyful future of living out biblical wisdom for day-by-day Christlikeness, serving God's kingdom and glorifying His name.

Faith Sown and Tended for Bountiful Harvest

"I refuse to be an ordinary man because I have an extraordinary God who makes extraordinary people," said Smith Wigglesworth. At age 48, this ordinary plumber, who was born into poverty in 1859 in England, was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

He would be nicknamed "Apostle of Faith," but his faith journey was not as straightforward as some may assume. Instead, like all of us, he lived in the tension between faith and struggle. Like all of us, he did not become a giant in the faith overnight. Instead, he went from faith to more faith.

Wigglesworth moved from nominal faith as a child, to going with his grandmother to meetings where people would lie prostrate on the floor while praying for others. Later he grew to belief that God really heals people and then to receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Once he was “stuck” leading a meeting on healing even though he was not sure he believed in it, only to end up praying for people and being encouraged when they were healed. This included 14 people who had died reportedly coming back to life when he prayed for them.

At times he was slow to embrace new areas of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. At one point he even started to falter in his faith when he returned to focusing on his work as a plumber. Then, when he was devastated by the untimely death of his beloved wife, he asked God to give him a double portion of anointing—his and hers. God was merciful and greatly increased the miraculous displays of His power in the broken-hearted evangelist’s ministry.

Even though Wigglesworth hesitated and pulled back at times, 80 years after his death, we continue to be inspired by writings and recordings of his faith-provoking preaching and testimonies of miracles.

People Do Want to Know

Like Wigglesworth, we each have our own faith journey. For “pre-believers” on the path toward asking Jesus Christ into their hearts, Romans 5:8-9 teaches, “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God,” the faith journey may ignite upon the arrival of Resurrection and Easter, a conversation with a friend over coffee, or some life trial too heavy for their own strength. It is easy to assume that most Americans have at least some grid for the basics of the plan of salvation. However, we cannot assume that people have any clue about the Good News. For example, I was one of

those who had grown up in the United States and went to Sunday School as a child. I had no idea what the words "Jesus Saves" meant. In fact, I was so clueless about it that for nearly two semesters in college, I drove past a huge "Jesus Saves" billboard every day and wondered, "What does Jesus save?"

The riddle was finally solved for me when three Christian missionaries briefly explained the power of the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ to me. I said, "Oh, now I get it, Jesus saves people from hell." I really had wanted to know and with a little further explanation about what it meant to be born-again, I confessed Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

To this day, I am thankful that these three young men were not timid about the truth. They had just returned from nearly a year on the mission field in the Philippines and wielded the sword of the Word of God with power and expertise.

Beyond The Article

Many years later, when I lived in Japan for a year and began offering classes on parenting from a Christian perspective, I discovered that other people (besides me) who seem unreachable may really want to learn about the gospel. When I posted flyers about the class, I did not expect anyone to come. However, to my genuine surprise, every single mother of the children I taught at the English immersion school in Kagoshima packed tightly into the room where I had arranged mats on the floor around a table. Each mother listened closely to my every word during all 16 sessions. Only one mom missed one of the sessions and apologized to all of us profusely. And each week I revealed a little more about blood sacrifices for sin in the Old Testament being fulfilled when the Word of God became flesh in the bodily form of Jesus Christ when He was born of a virgin.

After I felt that they had a good foundation on the Fall of Adam, the holiness of God and Old Testament sacrifices for sin, I described how Jesus paid the price for our sin when He

gave his life on the cross. I could not help but notice how wide their eyes were as they realized that Jesus offered Himself up as the perfect sacrifice for the Adamic sin. I was relieved when they all said in unison, "Ahhh!"

During the last weeks of the class, I explained that Jesus conquered hell, rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. At the end of the 16th class, the women all stood up and began weeping. I had no idea what was going on until my translator knelt in front of me and said that all the mothers asked her to represent them in thanking me for coming all the way from America to tell them about Jesus.

"Before you came, we only thought of Jesus as a baby," she said. "Now we understand. And, I don't want to just say that for them, I also want to thank you for myself," she said before breaking into tears. Once I had gotten past the shock of what had just happened, my own tears flowed. Then, I stood at the door as, one by one, each mother took my hands in hers and thanked me before passing through the doorway.

Like me during my senior year of college, they had wanted to know; and so, they had come back week after week. Then, they even brought their husbands to an additional class session so that I could explain it to them.

During that time, I learned that my classes had been a main topic of discussion for weeks. I later learned that missionary friends had started a home church near the school and some of the parents were attending.

Beauty For Ashes

Before going to Japan, I had a dark night of the soul when I took a Hermeneutics class at a Bible college. After learning about the wonders of the concordances, lexicons and commentaries, I bought every Bible study tool I could afford and hunkered down with them at my dining room table for a few months.

The effect was two-fold. On the one hand, I learned about God's love. On the other hand, I came to realize that for many years I had been misled by very heavy-handed preaching that took Scriptures out of context and painted God as being cruel and distant.

A few more spiritual and emotional injuries later, I felt like my life had been a waste and I was devastated. Grief began to set in, but God did not leave me in despair. Slowly but surely, He led me to take baby steps back toward Him.

My first baby step was to hold my Bible while I slept. Even though I was afraid to open my Bible, I found comfort in holding it. Then, I watched Christian television for 30 seconds a day for one week, and then week after week I added 30 more seconds. When I had reached five minutes a day at the end of the 10th week, I realized I had conquered a fear one baby step at a time. From there, I read a little more of my Bible each day and soon my love for reading and hearing God's Word was deeper than ever.

It Would Have Been Enough

Recounting what God has done for us strengthens our own faith. Sharing our testimonies strengthens our own faith and the faith of other people.

During Passover seder a song called "Dayenu" is sung. The literal meaning of the Hebrew word, *Dayenu*, is "it would have been enough." In life application it can imply that if God had only moved on our behalf one time, it would have been enough. The song recounts 15 different times in history when God miraculously moved on behalf of the Israelites, from slavery in Egypt to the building of the Temple in Israel. Each of the 15 stanzas that celebrates God's intervention is followed by a chorus expressing that if God had only intervened that one time, it would have been enough.

We can also apply *Dayenu* with expressions of celebrations and

thankfulness that if our salvation was the only way that God moved on our behalf, it would have been enough. In the words of Jonathan Edwards, capturing our lives made possible only in the Resurrected Christ, "The death of Christ was the greatest and most wonderful event that ever came to pass; but that has a great deal in it that is sorrowful. But by the Resurrection of Christ, that sorrow is turned into joy."

*During the Brownsville Revival, **Renee DeLoriea** was the managing editor of the Brownsville Revival Magazine, a columnist for the Remnant Newspaper and a freelance writer for Charisma magazine. Since then, she has edited books and written articles for numerous media outlets. She lives in Nashville.*