

## **EASTER SUNDAY**

29 MARCH 2026

### **SUMMARY**

This Easter message explores the transformative power of Christ's resurrection through the lens of faith, surrender, and spiritual growth. Bruce Downes reflects on how the disciples faced an identity crisis after Jesus's death, having left everything to follow Him. The message challenges believers to move beyond initial conversion to a deeper level of surrender - not just turning from sin, but emptying oneself of personal desires, ambitions, and even the outcomes we want for our lives. Using John 10:10 as a foundation, the message reveals that having life "to the full" means being completely emptied of self so that Christ can fully fill us. Bruce Downes shares personal experiences of faith-filled risk-taking with his wife Rosemary, illustrating how true faith requires stepping beyond our safety nets and security. The resurrection story demonstrates that blessed are those who believe without seeing, as physical sight can actually hinder deeper spiritual faith. The message culminates in a call to total spiritual transformation where God's desires become our desires.

### **KEY POINTS**

- The disciples experienced complete disorientation and identity crisis after Jesus's death, having left everything to follow Him
- Five reasons why seeing can get in the way of believing: ourselves (self-doubt), others (their disbelief), wanting repeated experiences, only faith lasts, and our eyes see only at one level
- True surrender goes beyond turning from sin to surrendering our dreams, ambitions, success, and desired outcomes to God
- John 10:10, "I came that you may have life and have it to the full," means being emptied of self-desire so Christ can fill us completely
- Faith requires consistent choosing and cannot be forced or proven through physical evidence alone
- The resurrection calls us to interior conversion and complete transformation, not just behavioral change
- Building faith communities requires people with hearts seeking after God, not perfect circumstances
- Spiritual maturity means being more concerned with God's will than our own way

**SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:**

- Luke 24:1-12 (The empty tomb and resurrection account)
- John 20:24-29 (Thomas doubting and Jesus appearing)
- John 10:10 (I came that you may have life and have it to the full)
- References to Peter's denial and Jesus's prediction of it
- Reference to Paul's teaching on being transformed by the renewing of our mind

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### **SMALL GROUP GUIDE**

This guide is designed to help your small group dive deeper into the message.

### **OPENING PRAYER**

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open hearts to God's transforming work during this Easter season. Pray the IMPACTERS Community Prayer .

### **ICEBREAKER**

Share about a time when you or someone you know took a significant risk in faith. What was the outcome? How did it impact your/their relationship with God?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

#### **Understanding the Text**

1. Put yourself in the disciples' shoes on that first Easter morning. What emotions do you think they experienced? How does the resurrection answer their four questions?
2. Bruce Downes shared that "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." How does this challenge our modern desire for tangible proof?

#### **Personal Reflection**

3. Which of the five reasons "seeing gets in the way of believing" resonates most with you? Why?
4. Bruce Downes distinguished between initial surrender (turning from sin) and deeper surrender (emptying ourselves of our own desires). Where are you in this journey? What does deeper surrender look like in your current season of life?
5. Rosemary moved from operating out of fear to operating out of faith. What area of your life is God calling you to move from security to faith?

#### **Going Deeper**

6. Bruce Downes said, "Can I surrender the results I want for Him? Can I surrender who I always thought I would be for Him?" What dreams, plans, or expectations might God be asking you to surrender?
7. How have you understood John 10:10 in the past? How does the interpretation shared today (life = conversion; fullness = complete emptying for His filling) change or deepen your understanding?
8. Bruce Downes mentioned that as we age, surrender shifts from turning from obvious sin to surrendering success itself. How does this perspective on spiritual maturity challenge you

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

**Option 1: The Surrender Prayer** Each day, spend 10 minutes in prayer asking God, "What desire of mine needs to die so that Your desire can live in me?" Journal what comes to mind.

**Option 2: Faith Over Fear Audit** Identify one area where you're operating from fear rather than faith. What would it look like to move from security-seeking to faith-walking in this area? Take one concrete step this week.

**Option 3: The Emptying Exercise** Make a list of your dreams, goals, and definitions of success. Bring them before God and ask Him to show you which ones are yours and which ones are His. Be willing to let go of what He asks.

**Option 4: Blessed Without Seeing** Thank God each day this week for three specific ways that NOT seeing Jesus physically has actually strengthened your faith or deepened your relationship with Him.

## **CLOSING PRAYER PROMPTS**

Pray together using this framework:

- **Thank** Jesus for His death and resurrection
- **Confess** areas where we're holding onto our own desires instead of His
- **Ask** for grace to surrender at deeper levels
- **Commit** to being emptied so He can fill us completely

## **FOR NEXT WEEK**

Reflect on this question: "What would my life look like if I truly believed that losing everything for Christ was gain?" Be prepared to share your thoughts.