

The teachFASTly.com resources are not intended as a complete curriculum. The activities are designed to be woven into your existing teaching. This Quick Stop Lesson Plan is therefore not a single lesson plan, but rather a quick way of exploring the themes of an activity map. It includes one Discover activity, one Delve activity, and one Debrief activity. Together, these may take more than a class period, and you may want to add other activities between them. For more information visit www.teachfastly.com.

Resurrection

Science is often seen in today's Western culture as the ultimate source of authentic knowledge. It has, many would argue, dispelled myths, displaced superstition, and gifted us with objective truth. When we think about tensions in the relationship between faith and science we may most immediately think about questions of origins, yet the resurrection of Christ is more central to Christian theology, and is also seen by believers in materialistic scientism as a claim that must be discounted on the basis of modern science. As we know in more scientific detail than ever before, dead people stay dead. Is belief in the resurrection a pre-scientific superstition or could it still be rational?

This activity map for high school Bible class aims to help students engage with the resurrection from several angles. How much can the methods of natural science tell us about the activity of God? Was it easier for first century Christians to believe in resurrection? Were they more gullible folk who expected people to rise from death and so were more easily deceived? And what are the grounds for claiming that belief in the resurrection remains rational and defensible? These activities aim to model the practice of addressing faith questions in a way that neither overestimates nor dismisses science.

It is recommended that work on this topic be coordinated between science and Bible teachers, and that good communication with parents be practiced.

This Quick Stop Lesson Plan on **Resurrection** contains the following activities and attachments from www.teachfastly.com, which are combined for your ease of use in a downloadable ZIP file:

DISCOVER Activity: The Absurdity of Resurrection
No Activity Attachment Required

DELVE Activity: Knowing About the Resurrection
Activity Attachment
• *Knowing About the Resurrection PowerPoint*

DEBRIEF Activity: Who Do You Say That I Am?
No Activity Attachments Required

DISCOVER

Activity: The Absurdity of the Resurrection?

Time: 15 Minutes

In Brief

This lesson attempts to raise students' awareness of the controversial nature of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For reasons that often claim to be grounded in science, the most vocal opponents of Christianity argue that the resurrection is illogical and never happened.

Goals

The connection of resurrection to discussions about faith and science is introduced. Students begin to reflect on how science relates to belief in the resurrection and on what science can help us know.

Thinking Ahead

The first activity is focused on how central the resurrection is to the Christian faith: according to Paul, the whole structure of the gospel falls apart without it. This activity turns to some reasons why many do not accept this core claim of the Christian faith and, in doing so, draws us into consideration of faith and science, indicating that faith/science discussions are relevant to more than questions of origins. As you prepare for this task, consider what the learning needs of your particular students might be. Are some of them so accustomed to living in a strong faith community that they simply assume the resurrection makes sense to everyone, and therefore need prompting to think through challenges from other perspectives? Or might students be bringing unarticulated doubts and concerns about this topic, and seeking grounds for their own faith? Consider your classroom practice: do you tend to be a teacher who likes to disrupt complacency or one who works at encouraging faith? How might your own tone and how it is communicated in words, posture, and body language impact different students? Teaching FASTly involves honest truth-seeking that affirms both faith and investigation.

Preparing the Activity

Optional: set up technology to project the suggested film clips.

Teaching the Activity

Begin with some questions to engage students in initial reflection:

- Is it easy or difficult to believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Why?
- Is there evidence for or against the resurrection?
- How many of you personally know someone who has been raised from the dead? Is that relevant?

After brief discussion, tell students that in 2007 theologian N. T. Wright was invited to give a lecture under the title “Can a Scientist Believe in the Resurrection?” <https://www.faraday.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/CIS/Wright/lecture.htm>. Ask: why would a title like this be chosen? Why was the title not “Can a teacher believe in the resurrection?” or “Can a businessman believe in the resurrection?” Why might the organizers have assumed that scientists in particular may have a hard time believing in the resurrection? What does this title tell us about how we see the relationship between science and faith? (It suggests that faith and science are seen as being in tension, and therefore that being a scientist makes it harder to have faith).

Allow some time for discussion. Ask further questions to help students begin to make some distinctions:

- Would science ever lead us to expect the resurrection to happen?
- What kinds of things is science best equipped to study?
- Are scientific laws statements about what always happens on the basis of repeated observation, or do they legislate what can happen? Can natural science be used to study history?
- How do our beliefs affect how we see the relationship of science to the resurrection? How might a materialist worldview where the only realities and possible events in the universe are those governed by material processes, or a theist worldview where there are realities beyond the material and God can act in his world, see the relationship differently?

There is no need to unpack these issues at great length at this point in this brief introduction. The purpose of this activity is to raise the questions and offer students lines of thinking to pursue in the material that follows. To check understanding, ask students to summarize briefly in writing how the question of the scope of science might be relevant to belief in the resurrection.

Optional: present a video showing the perspective of a skeptic presenting arguments against believing in the resurrection of Jesus. A short, general example that targets

all miracles together and appeals to scientific laws as a reason for skepticism is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JI-0py-YQY>. Follow this with a video presenting the opposite view, such as <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0Dc01HVlaM>. Discuss with students what kind of arguments are made by each person. For example, the first appeals to science, the second to other commonly recognized and reliable sources of information about the world. What kinds of evidence are most relevant to considering a claim that an event as utterly unique as the resurrection happened in history?

DELVE

Activity: Knowing About the Resurrection

Time: 25 Minutes

In Brief

This activity engages students in considering how we know things and form beliefs in multiple ways. It aims to help students see how our way of knowing relates to the resurrection and the question of whether belief in the resurrection is scientific.

Goals

Students understand that different kinds of inquiry and evidence, scientific and non-scientific, are used to arrive at knowledge of different kinds of things. Students understand the importance of testimony in knowing about unique historical events.

Thinking Ahead

This activity takes an indirect approach to a common objection in online debates: the question of whether the resurrection is unscientific and in conflict with what we know from modern science. The activity seeks to add a little complexity to the question by introducing two key ideas.

First it asks students to consider the variety of ways we know things, some of which simply fall outside what the scientific method can address. The question of whether we should regard natural science as the best path to truth is a philosophical, rather than a scientific, question and not one that science itself is well suited to answer.

Second, the activity engages students in considering how we come to trust accounts of very unusual and once-only events. It looks at how our background beliefs and assumptions contribute to whether we find the testimony of others plausible.

This activity does not conclude that science has nothing to do with the resurrection. Science tells us what we have always known, that resurrection is not the kind of thing that normally happens. Rather the activity points out that science only offers one kind of question (could this occur naturally?) alongside other ways of seeking truth. Note that the goal of this activity is not to prove anything regarding the resurrection. It simply suggests some ways of critically examining the view that natural science is the only, or best, frame for thinking about whether people should believe in the resurrection. It points to the complexity of our ways of knowing. Teaching FASTly is about exploring the positive roles of both faith and science.

Preparing the Activity

Needed: presentation slides in **Knowing About The Resurrection PowerPoint**

Teaching the Activity

Begin by asking the students a series of seemingly random questions:

- When were you born?
- Who was the first king of Israel?
- What did you have for breakfast this morning?
- Where are we right now?
- Is it ever right to steal?
- Does the person next to you have hopes and dreams?

Use the slides in **Knowing About the Resurrection PowerPoint**. For each slide:

- First present the question and have students answer to a partner.
- Then reveal the examples of *how* we come to believe things and ask students how they arrived at answers. Students may add other possibilities. These suggestions are intended to help discussion, not cover every possibility.
- Then ask students whether the way they arrived at the answer was a reasonable way to arrive at an answer to this kind of question.
- Finally ask whether the answer to this question could be verified using the methods of natural science. Are the other ways of finding things out less trustworthy? Note that in answering this question students may suggest strategies that are not actually examples of natural scientific method, but sound scientific. Insist that students be reasonably precise in labeling something as natural science.

As a transition, ask students to consider what all of this might have to do with arguments about whether the resurrection could have happened, whether it is compatible with modern science, and whether we can be justified in believing in it. Mention this briefly to orient students to the topic, and then say that you are going to ask them to consider the question from another angle: how do we deal with highly unusual events?

Next narrate to students the following scenarios taken from the next slide, titled *Can You Believe?* in which they imagine themselves hearing about an unusual event:

- A friend attends a local football game and tells you the next day that they

witnessed the kicker, who you know to be a player of very limited ability, kicking a 60-yard field goal.

- A family member calls you to the window. They say that they saw a kind of animal that you know does not live in your country or climate zone walking around in your back yard. By the time you look it is gone.
- You read a social media post from someone who lives in a remote, dry, desert town in Australia, hundreds of miles from the coast. They report that yesterday a large number of living fish suddenly fell from the sky. Note: this is apparently a true story: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1254812/Hundreds-fish-fall-sky-remote-Australian-town-Lajamanu.html> or https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rain_of_animals.

For each scenario, ask students to discuss:

1. Would you believe the story? Why or why not?
2. Is the imagined event possible? What could explain it actually happening?
3. If you are doubtful, what might lead you to believe in the story?

Elicit that the decision whether to believe the accounts is going to depend on matters such as whether we can accept a picture of the world in which the event seems possible, whether the narrator seems a balanced and trustworthy person, and whether we can corroborate the story through evidence or the testimony of others.

Ask students how the stories of the resurrection are similar, to or different from, the examples just discussed.

- Similarities may include: it is a highly unusual occurrence; we are dependent on the testimony of others and our inclination to trust them; we can't do an experiment to prove what happened; our acceptance or doubt might depend on our wider beliefs about how the world works. For example, is there a God who acts in the world? If so, resurrection becomes more possible. Is there a zoo nearby from which animals often escape? The second story becomes more plausible.
- A significant difference is that the three stories above can all be understood without going outside natural processes. For example, perhaps the kicker had a sudden tail wind; the animal could be an escaped exotic pet; the fish may have been picked up by a tornado. The resurrection seems even further outside the norm since it overcomes the normal processes of death and decay.

Finally, point out that science plays an important but limited role, among a range of other ways of trying to find out the truth. Most science works by establishing what happens repeatedly when one set of material factors encounter another set of material factors. What are things it will not be good at examining? How can it adequately address unique events? Is the idea of a new creation breaking forth from the old, as Jesus' resurrected and transfigured body broke forth from death something that can be addressed using scientific method? Science can tell us that the resurrection is not normal and that it goes against the way the material world functions. Which of the other ways of forming beliefs that we have been considering might apply to forming beliefs about God's actions in history? Note that subsequent activities will explore how this relates to the views of early Christians.

To check understanding of the distinctions in how we know truth, and their relevance, ask students to briefly summarize, in a sentence or two for each, the roles of science, testimony, and background beliefs in weighing the plausibility of the resurrection.

DEBRIEF

Activity: “Who do YOU say that I am?”

Time: Homework or 45 Minutes

In Brief

This concluding activity offers writing tasks that give students an opportunity to draw together what they have learned and respond personally. It both tests understanding of the material explored and allows students to express how they see the resurrection in light of what they have learned.

Goals

Students respond to what they have learned about the resurrection in a more extended piece of writing, demonstrating their grasp of the material studied in previous activities, and also articulating a personal response.

Thinking Ahead

This activity map has sought to engage students in understanding the faith-informed reasoning that thoughtful Christians use to defend the rationality of belief in the resurrection. It has also looked at the relevance of natural science to considering the possibility of the resurrection, suggesting that natural science has a very limited ability to investigate possible actions of a non-material God acting upon the natural world. This final writing activity creates an opportunity for you to assess the clarity of students' understanding of the issues. It is, however, also important to create space for students to respond personally. This part of the assignment is a chance for students to express their own convictions and should not be assessed against a correct answer.

Preparing the Activity

Students should have materials needed to write/type/record their thoughts on the resurrection of Jesus.

Teaching the Activity

Alternative 1:

Have students write a short essay in class or at home that responds to all of the following prompts:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the view that modern science makes it hard to believe in the resurrection?

- What are the main reasons why many highly educated people still believe in the resurrection?
- What kinds of evidence are most relevant in this debate?
- Which arguments do you personally find most persuasive?
- Why does the question matter?

Alternative 2:

Have students choose a biblical character who responded to the resurrection. Do they, for instance, identify readily with John, who went into the empty tomb and believed? Do they see themselves as Thomas, eventually believing but needing to first overcome a certain amount of skepticism? Can they imagine themselves as Peter, confidently preaching to the crowd at Pentecost? Or possibly do they understand the reaction of the women at the end of Mark who flee Jesus' empty tomb terrified, not knowing what to think? Ask students to write a reflection on the resurrection, what it means, and how they think about it, from the point of view of that Bible character, showing an awareness of the historical and theological context.

Alternative 3:

Have students write a dialogue between a believer and a skeptic focused on whether it is reasonable to believe in the resurrection. Ask them to conclude with a personal reflection on which side of the argument they found easier to write and why.