

[1] It isn't easy being a caterpillar. It takes an age to get anywhere. And when you get there, all you get is more leaves! It's a monotonous march we may relate to. Birth, school, work, marriage, babies, retirement, death. En route, there are cures for boredom in abundance: adventure and escapism, drink and drugs, wealth and power, sex and alternative sex. Still we are dissatisfied.

We need something more. So society offers solutions. **[2]** Go to Glenn Harold, the UK's Best-selling Self Help Author, to "Get the Life You Want". He's "The One That Works". But if He doesn't – **[3]** "Get your Life back on Track with 101 Free Success Tips". And, if they don't work, don't worry – there's millions more out there. If you really can't make life work: why not make a new one, online! **[4]**

Sadly, self-help mantra, even Guardian journalism, leaves us dry. Like the caterpillars, we long for something more than this.

The Easter Story offers us an answer. **[5]** Resurrection is the real thing. Sometime before his death, Jesus told a Samaritan woman that He would give living water to anyone who asked for it. And explained, that this living water is better than any mineral water, better even than Coca-cola. For "whoever drinks the water [Jesus] give[s] him will never thirst. Indeed, the water [Jesus] give[s] him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Coke is not the real thing. Material things cannot quench our thirst. Only Jesus offers water that satisfies. His water is living. It is life itself. Life we can drink, that becomes a spring inside us - gushing forth endless life.

On the third day, some women went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices. But they found the stone at the door had been rolled away. **[6]** Angels met them and asked: "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you."
He is risen! He is risen! He is risen!

He died a horrendous death, for our sake. But it was not the end. He had authority to lay down his life and to take it up again. Death cannot hold Jesus for Jesus is life. **[7]** In the beginning, Jesus was with God. Jesus was God. He gave life to everything. Everything was made through him. He is life itself.

One of the disciples that in Jesus **[8]** "life [had] appeared; [he and the disciples had] seen it and [they] testif[ied] to it, .. [they] proclaim[ed] the eternal life, which was with the Father and [had] appeared to [them]." Jesus is the life. **[9]**

On the Cross, He paid the price our wrongdoing deserves. We can be completely forgiven and reconciled to God. To be reconciled to God is an excellent thing. But it is not the end. The Easter Story doesn't end on the Cross. Jesus rose again so we could have a new life in Him.

The Cross means an end to our old broken way of life. The resurrection means the beginning of a new way of life. Resurrection life. The promise of God is that if we share in His death, by repentance, we will also share in his life. **[10]** God wants an eternal relationship with those He reconciles to Himself.

Hence the resurrection meetings with named disciples. **[11]** It wasn't a stunt. Look what I can do! God was offering new life to them, to you, and to me. The purpose of His resurrection was **us**.

What do I mean by new life? Most of you seem to be alive. Most of you.

The Resurrection reveals a new kind of life. It is as new as the life you were given in your mother's womb. **[12]** As the caterpillars told us: you have to be born again. Not physically, from a mother's womb, but born of God by the Holy Spirit.

"Born again" is often a derogatory term - associated with overly-enthusiastic evangelicals. But, in fact, every Christian must be born again. There is no other kind of Christian. For there is no way to enter into eternal life with Christ than rebirth by His Spirit. **[13]** Unless the life of Christ is born in us, our bodies will decay, from dust back to dust.

The Risen Jesus is not the same as the Jesus that went to the Cross. We have seen how He 'appeared' to the disciples. People do not normally appear. Spirits appear - but the Risen Lord was not a spirit. He told the disciples as much and they touched him and he ate with them.

He was a new creation, God, man and spirit combined. The life in his Spirit made his mortal body whole. His mortal body was not left in the tomb; it was transformed by His Spirit. As a caterpillar's body is not left behind; it is transformed into a butterfly.

[14] We who believe are promised the same transformation. God gives life even to our mortal bodies. I am not saying that you will be able to walk through walls - just yet! I am saying: that the Spirit will heal your body, not just your soul.

When we believe, we receive the Spirit of Christ, the Living Water into our souls. This deposit satisfies our thirst and begins to give life to our mortal body. It also guarantees that, when Christ returns, we shall be made whole like Him. **[15]** The early disciples wrote of this process of transformation and their desire for the life of Christ in them to overwhelm their mortal selves.

Resurrection life is (i) new; (ii) it brings life to our mortal bodies and (iii) it is full. **[16]** Jesus didn't come to spoil our fun. He came to complete our lives. He takes away the things that hurt us and replaces them with good things. He satisfies the craving of our souls. He said, He had "come [to earth so] that we may have life, and have it to the full".

The ancient writer of the Book of Psalms shared our craving for more. **[17]** He wrote that: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God." He knew the source of satisfaction is God himself. We were made by God, for a relationship with God. He is the stream that quenches our thirst.

[18] Great news caterpillars! It is true! You are not bound to crawl around forever. You can be transformed. Born again. New creations! And the new will be surpassing, beautiful, with wings to soar above the ground.

Oh come on, this is hardly believable. It is amazing. Remember the wonder of the disciples. [19] They'd heard Jesus talk of His resurrection but when they saw it they were astonished. It took them time to get handle on it. We read that "when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted." He was standing there before them, but they didn't know what to make of it. *Really*, could this be?

It is amazing, but it is believable. Jesus confirmed it to the disciples by speaking and eating with them. We are told they were left bursting with joy. Left to become world changers. This band of unschooled fishermen began in wonder and doubt and finished by changing the world.

They were able to accept the resurrection because it was real and earthly. It happened amongst them. They could touch Jesus, chill with him, talk with him, even eat with him. We enter into the resurrection life in the same way.

[20] Resurrection life is not an abstract idea we can master. Not a theory that influences the way we live. It cannot be obtained by intellect. Not even mastery of the bible will give you life. Jesus warned those who diligently study the scriptures thinking they can have life by them yet refuse to come to Him. To have life, we must come to Jesus.

We cannot delegate life. Not to a self-help guru, nor a priest, nor any expert. The real thing must be experienced first hand. God is inherently personal. He exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Resurrection life requires a personal relationship of day-to-day engagement with God. You can't put a snapshot of resurrection in your wallet and think its sorted.

Consider the importance of simple meals in the resurrection accounts. Jesus met the disciples in mealtime. Resurrection life is not a momentary ecstatic experience it is discovered as we do ordinary things in community together. They touched Him. They ate with Him. Like the disciples, we experience resurrection in a life permeated by the presence of Jesus in the company of friends. We who have seen Jesus, follow Him together, share Him together.

Some folks live in denial - pretending they have life sorted. Deep down, everyone is seeking satisfaction. Jesus gives a solemn warning - [21] recorded in all four gospels - that if we love our life, if we think we have found life, if we think we have made it - we will lose it. We do not get life by achieving a level of comfort. Life does not consist of the abundance of our possessions (Luke 12:15).

[22] Jesus is the resurrection and the life. If want the real thing, we must come to Jesus, give up our broken way of life in repentance, and He will put His life in us. He breathes life into us as we hang out with Him.

[23] **On the third day, Jesus rose again and showed himself to his disciples.** He offers everyone a share in His resurrection life: new, transforming and completing.

Life that quenches our thirst forever. Nothing, but the real thing.

I guess there are three possible reactions:

1 You may doubt. Just as some disciples doubted. If that's you, why not hang out with Jesus some more. Come to church, read the gospels. Consider Jesus. If you haven't got a bible, let me know at the end.

2 You may have already received the gift of the Spirit. Great news! His life lives in you. But - you may be struggling nonetheless. I encourage you to engage with Jesus. Only He can satisfy. It is by standing firm in Him and living in His love and righteousness that we enter life (see Matt 19:17, Luke 21:19, Rev 2:10). As you rest today, think on Jesus, as you eat and share community, look for him, allow Him to transform you as you go about your day. Take hold of the life for which Christ took hold of you.

3 Finally, some of you may want a share in this new life right now. You can. Resurrection life is a gift to be received. It is offered to everyone but not forced on anyone. Like the caterpillars, you have the potential. Ask and you shall receive.

We can ask with a simple prayer of sorry, thank you and please.

- Sorry – for the things we know we have done wrong;
- Thank you – for paying the price for our sins on the cross
- Please – forgive me and fill me with your life.

I am going to ask that everyone bows their heads, just for a moment, in case anyone wants to say that prayer right now.

Jesus is here. You can speak to Him now. Just echo my words in your heart.

PRAY

If you prayed that prayer for the first time, I'd love to talk so please grab me at the end. We can get a bible for you.