

What Rose

Part 1 of 3: Leader Preparation Guide

■ Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group examines what the witnesses actually said rose: not a resuscitated corpse and not a ghost, but a transformed, glorified body, the firstfruits of a new creation; the remaining threads resolve; and the study ends with an open door, not a closed sale.

Catholic Touchstone. CCC 645-646 and 999: the risen body is the same body, truly touchable, bearing the wounds, yet glorified, “not limited by space and time”; and CCC 655: Christ’s resurrection is “the principle and source of our future resurrection.”

■ What You Need to Know

Session 2 planted Thread 4 with a single sentence: the witnesses knew the difference. Tonight it resolves. Lazarus came back to ordinary mortal life, still bound in grave clothes, and later died; the widow’s son and Jairus’s daughter likewise (CCC 646). What the witnesses claimed for Jesus was another category: the same Jesus, emphatically bodily (“flesh and bones,” wounds available to Thomas’s finger, fish eaten, breakfast cooked), yet no longer bound by the conditions of mortal bodies: appearing among them though “the doors were shut” (John 20:19), unrecognized and then known, vanishing at Emmaus, and, decisively, beyond death’s reach forever: “Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him” (Rom 6:9). The grave clothes left folded in the tomb, which the theft theory could not explain, quietly preach the same point: Lazarus came out wearing his wrappings because he would need them again; Jesus left his behind.

Paul’s vocabulary for this is *sōma pneumatikon*, a “spiritual body” (1 Cor 15:44), which means a body wholly animated by the Spirit, not a body made of vapor; the same chapter insists on continuity (“this mortal nature must put on immortality,” 15:53) and calls the risen Christ “the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (15:20). First fruits are the front edge of one harvest: what happened to him is, on the witnesses’ claim, the preview of what will happen to those who are his (CCC 655, 988-991, 1002-1003). This is why the resurrection was never, for the first Christians, merely a stunning fact about the past; it was the future arriving early.

John frames it as new creation, and tonight the garden seed from Session 3 finally blooms. The tomb was in a garden (John 19:41); on “the first day of the week” Mary Magdalene, weeping, takes the risen Lord for “the gardener” (John 20:15). John does not wink at his readers; he simply lets a man stand in a garden at dawn on creation’s first day and be mistaken, correctly, for the gardener, the role Adam abandoned. Genesis opened with God planting a garden and walking in it with man; the Gospel answers with a garden, a new first morning, and the second Adam at work. The group should be allowed to discover this; it is the study’s most beautiful find, and it belongs to them.

Then the ending, which must be handled with reverence for your friend’s freedom. The study closes where the risen Christ closes: not with an argument but with invitations accepted and extended: a meal at Emmaus, breakfast at the shore, “come and have breakfast” (John 21:12). The final page offers your friend Rev 3:20, Christ’s own image of himself at the door that only opens from the inside, and names concrete next steps without pressure: keep meeting, read a Gospel together slowly, come and stand in the back at Mass some Sunday (the day whose origin he now knows) and watch. If his verdict last week was still no or not yet, tonight is not a second trial; it is the assurance that the door has no lock on Christ’s side and no deadline, and that the friendship at this table was never contingent on his

conclusion. Say that last part in your own words, and mean it; it may be the most Christian evidence he has seen in eight weeks.

▪ Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Thread 3 resolves in the upper room: “everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures (Luke 24:44-45): the whole threefold Hebrew Bible, read as one story whose shape was always death-and-third-day (the group’s own finds: Psalm 16, Hosea 6, Jonah, Isaiah 53, Psalm 118, Zechariah 12). Add tonight the garden of Genesis 2-3 behind John 20:15, and Ezekiel’s dry bones (Ezek 37:12-14: “I will open your graves”) behind the harvest of 1 Corinthians 15. The study’s claim is Luke’s claim: the scriptures were not decorated with predictions; they were aimed.

▪ Voices of the Church

St. Athanasius of Alexandria • *On the Incarnation, chapters 27-29, c. AD 318*

Athanasius points to a public, observable change as his evidence that death has died: in substance, that before Christ death was the terror of terrors, and now Christians, even children and young women, trample it, mocking what once mastered mankind; a tyrant visibly bound is a tyrant visibly beaten, and the daily courage of ordinary believers is the resurrection’s living proof. A summary in our words.

St. Leo the Great • *Sermons on the Resurrection (Sermon 71)*

Leo preaches in substance that the forty days of eating, touching, and conversing were designed mercy: the Lord delayed his ascension so that the reality of his risen flesh would be fixed beyond doubt in the witnesses, and through them in us; our faith rests not on a rumor of glory but on handled evidence. A summary in our words.

St. Gregory of Nyssa • *Catechetical Oration, on the defeat of death*

Gregory teaches in substance that in the resurrection God did not merely rescue one man from death but broke death from the inside: life entered death’s domain as light enters darkness, and the principle of mortality itself was ruptured, so that the resurrection of Christ is the beginning of the undoing of death for the whole race. A summary in our words.

▪ Catechism Connection

- **CCC 645-646:** the same body, truly touchable, bearing the marks of the Passion, yet possessing “the new properties of a glorious body,” present how and where he wills.
- **CCC 647:** one last time: the rising itself, no one saw; what rose, the witnesses handled.
- **CCC 655:** Christ’s resurrection is the principle and source of our own; the firstfruits logic of 1 Corinthians 15.
- **CCC 988-991, 999-1001:** “We believe in the resurrection of the body”: what God did for Christ he will do for those who are his.

▪ Thread Watch

THREAD WATCH • leader only

Thread 3 resolves. Luke 24:44-47 in the upper room: Moses, prophets, psalms, one aimed story. Recap the group’s own finds as the resolution; they earned each one.

Thread 4 resolves. Lazarus versus Jesus: resuscitation versus resurrection, CCC 646 read aloud, the folded

grave clothes as the quiet emblem.

The ledger retires. Suggest each of the three photograph or copy it; it is a shared document of a shared road. If the group wants to keep meeting, the final page names paths.

▪ **Leading This Study Well**

LEADING THIS STUDY WELL • leader only

Tonight is gift, not argument. The case closed last week. If your friend re-litigates, gently offer to take it up over coffee any week he likes, and return to the text. Tonight shows what the claim means, which is itself information a verdict needs.

The invitation must be real and pressure-free. Offer concrete doors (keep meeting; a Gospel read slowly together; standing in the back at Mass) and make explicit that the friendship is not contingent. If he says “not yet,” the correct answer is “then not yet, and we’re still on for whatever ordinary thing you do together.”

Let him find the gardener. The John 20:15 discovery is the night’s treasure. Set up the hunt and keep silent until someone sees it.

▪ **Session Goals**

1. Thread 4 resolves: the group articulates resurrection versus resuscitation from Luke 24, John 20, Romans 6:9, and CCC 646.
2. The group works through 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 and 42-49: firstfruits and the *sōma pneumatikon* rightly understood.
3. The group discovers the garden and the gardener (Gen 2-3; John 19:41; 20:15).
4. Thread 3 resolves in the upper room (Luke 24:44-47).
5. The study closes with a real, pressure-free invitation and named next steps.

▪ **Time Note**

75 to 90 minutes. If you must cut: compress the 1 Corinthians 15 section to verses 20-23 and 42-44. Never cut the gardener discovery or the closing invitation, and do not let the invitation be rushed; end early rather than end pressed.

What Rose

Part 2 of 3: Discussion Guide

▪ Opening Prayer

Leader: Lord, we have spent seven weeks asking whether you rose. Tonight we ask what rose, and what it means for the three of us. Speak, and give us ears. Amen.

▪ Win

1. If you learned beyond doubt that death was not the end of you, what is the first thing in your life that would change?
2. What is the best meal you have ever been invited to, and what made the invitation matter?

▪ Build

Read aloud: Luke 24:36-49.

1. List what the risen Jesus does in this scene to establish what he is, and notice what he is establishing *against*: what did they think he was (v. 37)? And what does he do with the scriptures (vv. 44-47)?

ANSWER • share after the discussion

Against “a spirit”: he shows hands and feet, invites touch (“flesh and bones”), and eats broiled fish before them. Against a mere resuscitation, the rest of the evidence of the week testifies: doors shut, unrecognized then known, vanishing at Emmaus. Then Thread 3 resolves in his own voice: “everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled,” and “he opened their minds to understand the scriptures.” Every text the group hunted these eight weeks (Psalm 16, Hosea 6, Jonah, Isaiah 53, Zechariah 12, Psalm 118) was a piece of the one aimed story he is naming here.

2. Thread 4, planted in Session 2, resolves now. Read CCC 646 (on tonight’s Take-Home) and Romans 6:9. Put the difference between Lazarus and Jesus in one sentence each of your own.

ANSWER • share after the discussion

Lazarus was returned to this mortal life, wrappings and all, to age and die again: resuscitation. Jesus was raised beyond death’s jurisdiction entirely, “death no longer has dominion over him”: resurrection. One is a reprieve; the other is a conquest. The witnesses had seen both categories with their own eyes, which is precisely why their insistence on the second cannot be waved off as confusion about the first. Note the quiet emblem the group met in Session 3: Lazarus came out wearing his grave clothes; Jesus left his folded in the tomb. He was done with them.

Read aloud: 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, then 15:42-44 and 15:53.

3. “First fruits” is harvest language: the first sheaf brought in from a single crop. What is Paul claiming the resurrection is the first installment of? And what does his phrase “spiritual body” mean, given verse 53?

ANSWER • share after the discussion

Of one harvest that includes “those who belong to Christ” (15:23): his rising is presented not as an exception to human destiny but as the beginning of it, “the principle and source of our future

resurrection” (CCC 655). “Spiritual body” (sōma pneumatikon) means a body wholly alive with the Spirit, not a phantom; verse 53 nails the continuity: “this mortal nature must put on immortality.” The same body, transformed; sown perishable, raised imperishable. If the verdict of Session 7 stands, this is what it purchased: not a religious idea, but a preview of the future of matter, including the matter sitting at this table.

4. Discovery hunt, the study’s last. Read John 19:41, then John 20:11-16, then Genesis 2:8 and 3:8-9. Where is the tomb? On what day of the week does the scene open? And whom does Mary Magdalene suppose Jesus to be? What is John showing you?

ANSWER • share after the discussion

The tomb is in a garden; the scene opens on “the first day of the week,” creation’s first morning; and Mary, weeping, takes the risen Lord for “the gardener.” Genesis began with God planting a garden and walking in it with man, and man losing it; John answers with a garden at dawn on a new first day, and a man mistaken, correctly, for the gardener. Her mistake is the Gospel’s deepest joke and truest caption: the second Adam is back at his work, and the new creation has begun in the middle of the old one. Thread 3’s final gift: the story did not just end where the scriptures aimed; it starts over where they started.

Read aloud: John 21:1-14.

5. Look at what the risen Lord of the universe is doing at dawn on that beach, and what he says in verse 12. After eight weeks of evidence, what kind of ending is this?

ANSWER • share after the discussion

Cooking breakfast for friends who abandoned him, and saying “Come and have breakfast.” Not a lecture, not a tribunal, an invitation to a meal, and “none of the disciples dared ask him, ‘Who are you?’ They knew it was the Lord.” The pattern held from Emmaus to the shore: he lets himself be invited, and he invites. The evidence of this study walked each of us to a door. The door, it turns out, has a table behind it.

The Open Door

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

Revelation 3:20 (RSV2CE)

This is Christ’s own picture of how this ends: he knocks; the handle is on the inside; and what he proposes, characteristically, is a meal. There is no deadline in the verse and no lock on his side of the door. Whatever each of us concluded in Session 7, this table is where the study lays down its work.

Concrete doors, all genuinely optional:

- Keep this table: same three people, once a month, any book or question we choose.
- Read one Gospel together, slowly (Mark takes an hour and a half aloud; ask the leader about *What Do You Seek?*, a companion study built for exactly this next step).
- Stand in the back at Mass some Sunday and watch what two thousand years of Session 6 looks like from the inside. No one will make you do anything; you now know why it is Sunday.
- Or simply keep the friendship, which was never contingent on any of this. That offer is permanent, and it is the point.

- **Send**

1. Eight weeks ago each of us wrote what we thought happened that Sunday morning. Tonight, in one sentence, spoken or kept: what do you think now, and what do you want to do about it?

- **Live It This Week**

- Read John 20:1-18 one more time, slowly, watching for the garden.
- Whatever your verdict, tell one trusted person one thing you learned in these eight weeks that you did not know before.

- **Closing Prayer**

Leader: Lord Jesus, if you are risen, you are here, and you have heard every question these eight weeks with more patience than we had. Thank you for this table and these friends. Stand at each of our doors and knock as long as it takes, and let none of us be afraid of the sound. Amen.

- **Scripture Memory Verse**

For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

Romans 6:9 (RSV2CE)

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Part 3 of 3: Leader Reference Card

▪ Every Passage Used Tonight

- Luke 24:36-49 • read aloud (flesh and bones; Thread 3 resolves at vv. 44-47)
- Romans 6:9 • read aloud (Thread 4 resolves); also memory verse
- 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 42-44, 53 • read aloud (firstfruits; spiritual body)
- John 19:41; John 20:11-16 • discovery hunt (the garden; the gardener)
- Genesis 2:8; 3:8-9 • discovery hunt (the first garden)
- John 21:1-14 • read aloud (breakfast on the shore)
- Revelation 3:20 • read aloud (the open door)
- Ezekiel 37:12-14 • leader background (I will open your graves)
- CCC 645-646, 647, 655, 988-991, 999-1001 • doctrine anchors; 646 read aloud

Materials tonight: the retired Fact Ledger (for photographing), Take-Home 8. Next-step pointer: the companion study What Do You Seek? for a group that wants to keep reading. Tonight ends early rather than pressed.