

Do You Believe in Easter?

C.H. Dodd said, "The resurrection is the epicenter of belief. It is not a belief that grew up within the church. It is the belief around which the church itself grew up." Easter announces Christ's victory over sin and death and God's Confirmation of Jesus' saving activity on the Cross. When a Christian reaches the doors to eternity, their sin record will be sealed and stamped "Paid in full at Calvary". Easter announces how World History is going to end! When the curtain of world history falls, no ideology, no weapons system, and no economic system will reign supreme. Jesus alone will be revealed high and lifted up. I believe in the Resurrection of Jesus! From birth, I witnessed the power of the resurrection lived out in the lives of countless Christians. Two angels first told Mary Magdalene the good news. "He is not here. He has risen!" Then she in turn went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord." When Simon Peter heard the news from Mary Magdalene, he decided to go check it out for himself. He ran to the tomb. Those first disciples were so convinced of the resurrection of Christ that they died for their belief when a simple denial of resurrection would have saved them. Hundreds of thousands of First Century Christians suffered and died in agony rather than deny the truth of the resurrection and thousands are being murdered still today! Jesus touches our lives significantly, leaving his fingerprint on us. Then it's no longer ancient history; it's current events. Resurrection became real for the early disciples when they saw the risen Christ. "Suddenly Jesus appeared to the disciples. 'Greetings,' he said." (Matthew 28:9) At least one of the disciples, Thomas, had been extremely skeptical of the resurrection. Then Jesus met him face to face. "...he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands...Stop doubting and believe.'" (John 20:27) Jesus meets us in many ways at our points of need. As our eternal lives become secure and we experience the peace of Christ, we then Go and Tell the world. Then the cycle is complete and the news of resurrection spreads exponentially by YOU! Jesus' last command is our first order of business: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations." (Matthew 28:19) The Early Church did it well. Acts 5:42 tells us that "day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."

Edith Burns an elderly widow who loved Jesus, would often sit down with someone and say, "Hello, my name is Edith Burns. Do you believe in Easter?" If they said yes, she would ask them what they believed. If they talked about bunnies and colored eggs, she had a chance to share with them the real meaning of Easter. Countless people were led to Christ by Edith Burns, including her doctor's head nurse. One day her doctor called Edith into his office and said, "Edith, I've got bad news, your tests reveal an aggressive form of cancer, and you may not have long to live." Edith replied, "Why doctor, you need not look so sad. I have had a full life. Not long and I'm going to see my Lord Jesus face to face. I will be reunited with my dear husband, my parents, and so many friends." After several months of chemotherapy, she was admitted to the hospital. Everybody Edith met, she would say, "Hello, I'm Edith Burns. Do you believe in Easter?" She picked up a nickname in the hospital, Easter Edith. But there was one person who was not attracted to Edith. Phyllis Cross was a mean, ornery nurse. She had been an Army nurse for twenty years. She had been married four times. Phyllis told her supervisor, "I don't want to have anything to do with that religious nut, Edith Burns." One day Phyllis had to go to Edith's room to draw some blood. Edith said, "Phyllis, God loves you and I love you too, and I've been praying for you." Phyllis said, "Well, you can stop praying for me. It won't work and I'm not interested." Edith said, "I can't stop praying for you. And I've asked God not to let me go home until you have come into his family." Phyllis replied, "Then you will never die because that will never happen." Edith and Phyllis saw each other regularly over the coming weeks, but Edith never asked her the question she posed to everybody else, "Do you believe in Easter?" Finally, Phyllis' curiosity got the best of her. She said, "Edith, why have you never asked me if I believe in Easter?" Edith smiled and replied, "I asked God to have you ask me about the Easter question, and you just did." Phyllis was caught off guard. Her defenses dropped. Edith shared Christ with her. This tough old Army nurse invited Jesus into her heart as Savior and Lord. A few days later Phyllis walked into Edith's room and said, "Hey Edith, today is Good Friday." "No," said Edith, "It's Easter. In the life of a Christian, every day is resurrection day. Happy Easter, Phyllis." Two days later Phyllis walked into Edith's room on Easter Sunday and noticed a tranquil and peaceful smile on her face and her soul had departed to be with the Lord. Phyllis placed her hands on Edith's and said, "Happy Easter, dear." Several hours later Phyllis sat down in the break room to have a cup of coffee. One of the new student nurses happened to be there. Phyllis said, "Hello, my name is Phyllis Cross. Do you believe in Easter?" My dear friend, I pray you to believe in the resurrected Christ of Easter. I pray for you to have the peace of Christ for now and all eternity. Happy Easter!