

## **“The Solution for Trial and Error”**

Luke 24:1-12

Series: The Experiment

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After the theory of relativity made him famous, there was great demand for Albert Einstein to give lectures. His chauffeur Harry faithfully drove the scientist to many of these prestigious universities and sat in the back row to listen. On the way to another campus, Einstein complained he was exhausted by all these engagements. From the front seat Harry replied, “Professor Einstein, I’ve heard your lecture on Relativity so many times I bet I could deliver it just like you!” “Very well,” replied Einstein, “Since everyone says you look like me, why don’t I wear your chauffeur’s cap and sit in the back while you deliver the lecture up front.” True to his word, Harry delivered the lecture perfectly while Einstein sat in the back row playing chauffeur.

The trick almost worked until a scientist, who was jealous of Einstein, stood up to challenge him. To show off his knowledge, the professor asked a highly complex physics question. Harry began to sweat bullets. But then he paused, stared at the scientist and said, “My good man, the answer is very simple! In fact, it’s so simple even my chauffeur can answer it!”

Great discoveries change everything: the way we see the world, the way we see ourselves, the way we live. Copernicus and Galileo taught us the sun, not the earth, is the center of our solar system. Columbus finally proved the earth is round. Newton unlocked the formula of gravity. Einstein uncovered  $E=mc^2$  and Watson and Crick unveiled DNA. Each discovery was unexpected. Though each was proved by theories, experiments and complicated calculations, they also rested on centuries of trial and error by nameless people.

Truth is, we live by trial and error. As you look back you’ll probably see your life has been a long series of trial and error. Maybe in school you tried out for the team, for the play, for the choir. Sometimes you made it, sometimes not. I tried out for a play in high school and they said, “Congratulations you got a part on stage – it’s backstage.” Young people try out for various colleges, majors and jobs. Some switch colleges and jobs. Some my age are still trying to figure out what they want to be when they grow up. A person may date several people to try to find the right one to marry. I heard about a guy who couldn’t find the right Valentine card in the store. The store clerk said, “How about this one: You are the only one for me. No one can compare. No one can ever take your place. Please be my Valentine.” The man said, “That’s perfect. I’ll take six.” Some couples try to have children. And some find it trying to have children.

Along with the trials, we rack up a lot of errors. You discover you picked the wrong major, college or career. You feel stuck in a stressful job. You made some financial decisions which put you deep in debt. You want to be the perfect parent but some days you cringe at the mistakes you’ve made. If we’re wise, we learn from our failures, try a different path and move on. Yet some errors are hard to erase. You know the ones: the errors you hope nobody finds out. They haunt you, they hurt you, they may even hold you hostage.

Every day is an experiment. You try to find the right chemistry in your relationships. You search for a successful formula in your career. You seek the perfect ingredients in your pursuit of

happiness. Some days the experiment works. Some days it blows up in your face. Occasionally you stop and wonder: Why didn't I try another way? Why did I make so many errors? Then comes one undeniable fact: your life experiment must end one day. Or does it?

Today, Easter, marks the greatest discovery in history – that death is not the end of life, that there is a solution to your trials and errors. Women were the first to make this discovery.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Luke 24:1-6

On Easter, these women made a discovery beyond all calculation: the tomb is empty and Jesus is alive. This discovery changes the way we see the world, the way we see ourselves and the way we live – now and forever. Some see a conflict between science and faith. I say faith is the greatest science of all because it studies the greatest subject of all: not atoms or amoebas, hyenas or humans but God. Natural science can test and study its subjects. Supernatural science must wait for God to reveal Himself. And that's what happens on Easter. God shows up in a big way.

Like all great scientific discoveries, **The Resurrection is totally unexpected.** While searching for a way to measure volume, Archimedes took a bath. Slipping into the tub he noticed the water level rise in proportion to the volume of his body. Jumping out of the tub, he ran naked through the streets crying, “Eureka!” which means, “I've found it.” Archimedes made three inventions: a measurement for volume, a word for new discoveries, and streaking.

Nobody expected Jesus to rise. It's the ultimate eureka moment in history. Expecting to find a corpse, the women return shouting, “We found Him.” Yet the disciples refuse to believe it.

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Luke 24:9,11

Why do the disciples doubt? Well obviously, dead bodies don't come back to life. What's more: death proves someone is not the Messiah. The Messiah is supposed to live and reign forever. The minute a so-called Messiah dies, the movement collapses. That's why the disciples ran away. Critics say they played a hoax on us. Yet they were the first doubters Jesus had to convince.

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” Luke 24:36-39

The proof of the Resurrection is this: instead of collapsing, Jesus' movement expands and explodes exponentially. No one was present at the Big Bang yet scientists believe it happened because of

the evidence of an expanding universe. Something explosive happened in Jerusalem. It transformed timid disciples into triumphant apostles who, in spite of persecution, ignited a chain reaction of faith in Jesus which is expanding around the globe two thousand years later.

The discovery of Easter means **God Takes On All Our Trials**. Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) Peter says, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” (I Peter 5:7). Easter reveals God is not distant or distracted, angry or apathetic, removed or unmoved. God wants to take on your trials and help you with your troubles. God gets His hands dirty helping us. God even suffers.

Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright shares:

Not long after September 11, I was on a panel with Elie Wiesel. He asked us to name the unhappiest character in the Bible. Some said Job, because of the trials he endured. Some said Moses, because he was denied entry into the Promised Land. Some said Mary, because she witnessed the crucifixion of her son. Wiesel said he believed the right answer was God, because of the pain he must surely feel in seeing us fight, kill, and abuse each other in the Lord's name.<sup>1</sup>

God suffers when He sees our pain. He does more than that. God willingly suffers when He takes on our trials and dies on the Cross. Yet even more than that, God shows He has the power to overcome our trials and tribulations when He rises from the dead. This is why Jesus says, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) Bring your trials to Jesus: trials with your marriage, children, parents, job, finances, illnesses and addictions. Let Him come beside you. Let Him comfort you. Let Him overcome them with you.

The discovery of Easter also means **God Erases All Our Errors**. Peter says,

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. (I Peter 2:24)

One died for all, so that all may live. The Sinless One was crushed by our sin, so we could be set free. The One who did no wrong, willingly took our punishment so we can live free. Yet many do not grasp what an incredible sacrifice He made for us. Many disregard His great gift.

You've probably never heard of Stanislav Petrov yet none of us would be alive today if it were not for him. On September 26, 1983, at a moment when the Soviet Union was on high alert for a nuclear attack from the West, Lieutenant Colonel Petrov was in charge of the Soviet Nuclear Early-Warning System in Oko. Suddenly the system begins screaming the United States launched a missile. Everyone is stunned by what is on the screens. Then it announces five more launches. Petrov knows he has a matter of minutes before the missiles strike. If he does nothing, his nation will be annihilated. If he passes on the warning, the world will perish in a holocaust. Five nerve-racking minutes pass. In that moment Stanislav Petrov decides the launch reports are a false alarm and refuses to pass on the warning. He is right. The system malfunctioned. His agonizing decision literally saved every person on the planet. We all owe him our lives. What did Stanislav

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<sup>1</sup> Madeleine Albright, in a talk given to Yale Divinity School in March 2004

Petrov receive for his courageous act? Reprimand and release from his position. His act was kept secret for decades even from his wife. He said once, "I was made a scapegoat."

On the Cross Jesus saves us from the destructive power of sin – a disease which causes physical and spiritual death. He died for the sins of every person who ever lived. He became our scapegoat. He gave His life to erase our errors. Even if you ignore him or dismiss him, it's still true. What's more, when He rises on Easter He proves He is more powerful than our sin. He faced the holocaust for us so we can be error free. That leads to the third discovery.

Easter means **God Leads Us to Life**. Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10) Jesus doesn't want you to be burdened by your trials and errors. He came to lead you to a full life. When He rose He shows He knows the way. In fact, Jesus is the Way, the Truth and Life (John 14:6). But you have to follow Him.

On March 22, Lisa and I went with our friends Mike and Aimee to see Fleetwood Mac at the Wells Fargo Center. We, being budget-conscious fans, decide to buy tickets in the upper, upper nose bleed section. After we find our seats, Mike and I offer to get coffee and water for our wives. We walk the entire circuit of the concessions and find no coffee. So Mike says, "That guy over by the escalator looks like he works here. Let's ask him." The man apologizes. "I'm sorry, there's no coffee for sale. But to make it up to you, would you like tickets down on the floor?" After our mouths hang open for a bit we say, "Why yes." When we go back to our wives we say, "We have bad news and good news. The bad news is we couldn't get coffee. The good news is a guy gave us tickets down on the floor." They don't believe us. "Very funny," they say. "Why didn't you get the water?" It takes a few minutes to convince them to leave the nose-bleed section and take the prime, expensive free tickets on the floor.

On Easter morning, the women went to the tomb looking for one thing and found good news beyond their wildest imaginations. But when they went back and told the others, it took a lot of convincing. In one of their songs Fleetwood Mac sings, "You can go your own way." God lets you go your own way. You can carry your trials and errors by yourself. You can stay up in the stands. You can do everything on your own. By why? If God has taken on your trials, erased your errors and is leading you to a blessed life, it would be foolish not to follow Him.

Next Sunday we'll begin a series called "The Experiment" based on Jesus' "Beatitudes." The word Beatitude means "blessing." Jesus begins His powerful Sermon on the Mount with eight surprising principles: Blessed are the poor in spirit...blessed are those who mourn...blessed are the peacemakers..." Each one is a powerful formula for living. But to unlock the blessing you have to try and test it, experience and experiment with it. Each Sunday we'll investigate one of Jesus' Beatitudes. During worship you'll receive five experiments about that Beatitude. Select one to perform during the week. You can join a Growth Group that's doing this. Find a "Lab Partner" – a friend to try the experiment with you. Come try these experiments and discover the blessings Jesus has waiting for you. Start your experiment today by taking the first step of committing or recommitting your life to Jesus on the back of your connection card.

Francis Collins, one of the greatest scientists of our age, was the Director of the Human Genome Project – a team of scientists who broke the 3.1 billion letter code of our DNA. Though he understood the complex science of life, he couldn't explain the meaning of life.

I was an atheist, finding no reason to postulate the existence of any truths outside of mathematics, physics and chemistry. But then I went to medical school, and encountered life and death issues at the bedsides of my patients.

I witnessed numerous cases of individuals whose faith provided them with a strong reassurance of ultimate peace, be it in this world or the next, despite terrible suffering.

My most awkward moment came when an older woman, suffering daily from severe untreatable angina, asked me what I believed. She had shared her own strong Christian beliefs with me. I felt my face flush as I stammered out the words "I'm not really sure."

That moment haunted me for several days. Did I not consider myself a scientist? Does a scientist draw conclusions without considering the data? Could there be a more important question in all of human existence than "Is there a God?"

I had to admit that the science I loved so much was powerless to answer questions such as "What is the meaning of life?" "Why am I here?" "If the universe had a beginning, who created it?" "What happens after we die?" Suddenly all my arguments seemed very thin, and I had the sensation that the ice under my feet was cracking.

My search to learn more about God's character led me to the person of Jesus Christ. Here was a person with remarkably strong historical evidence of his life, who made astounding statements about loving your neighbor, and whose claims about being God's son seemed to demand a decision about whether he was deluded or the real thing. After resisting for nearly two years, I found it impossible to go on living in such a state of uncertainty, and I became a follower of Jesus.

Francis Collins, found the Maker of Life and the meaning of life and if you want to make the greatest discovery of all, join me in the Easter greeting: "He is risen!" He is risen indeed.