What is Resurrection?

Christ has Risen! With the Glory of Resurrection comes new life, and new challenges in conveying understanding to our youth. Resurrection is the ultimate, eternal, big time, uber, epic, awesome reward we find in Jesus. Resurrection is what Jesus offers to those who follow him. Resurrection is also one of the hardest concepts to explain.

One Easter a couple years ago, I was talking to my youngest nephew, Eli, about Jesus’s resurrection. Eli was only five at the time. I tried to tell him about how Jesus was raised from the dead. He was dead, but now he was alive again. Eli knew what dead was. My brother-in-law is a big time hunter and after he bagged a few deer, Eli caught on to the concept. Every time we would drive somewhere, Eli would point out the deer along the side of the road by saying “Uncle, that deer is dead.” I knew he understood the concept, so I tried to work from there to explain resurrection. After several minutes of me struggling to explain this concept to a five year old, Eli stopped me and asked “Does this mean Jesus is a zombie?” I really have no idea how my five year old nephew learned about zombies. I would like to blame his older brother, but it was probably my fault.

I was going to fail before I even got started. The nature of resurrection is defined by new life, not by continuing the old life. It really has nothing to do with life and death; resurrection is experienced in this life. I am a Bible dork, and I love going down the rabbit hole of theology. I get this giddiness whenever I talk about the heavier aspects of Christianity. I love to get into the cultural context and Greek root words, and all that stuff. It is easy to go the academic route and miss the obvious: Resurrection is an experience.

The story of Iron Man is a resurrection story. By Iron Man I mean the actor Robert Downey Jr. (but the actual comic book hero Iron Man with the near death experience turning into super powers could also be one) Downey was a child actor. He experienced success early on, in large part to his successful father, but this relationship was a toxic one. Robert Downey Sr. was heavy into drugs, and encouraged this behavior in his son. Downey got into drugs and alcohol. He had several very public breakdowns. A good friend of mine described it as “Robert Downey Jr. was Charlie Sheen before Charlie Sheen was Charlie Sheen.” Downey got black balled from major roles. After several years in prison and several attempts at rehabilitation, Downey finally decided to commit to making a change in his life. He has been clean for years, and in these years his career has reached heights his previous life could never have dreamed to. Now, Robert Downey Jr. is far from a saint, but the second chance, this new life, is quite apparent in him. Going from addict to super star, that was his resurrection experience.

Experiences can be seen, described, and shared. Experiences are something concrete that the youth can wrap their brains around. So how are we sharing our resurrection experiences with the youth? That’s not rhetorical; I would LOVE to hear your stories. I have my own experiences that I share with the youth I work with. It is important to share these experiences, work with the kids to find an operative
definition of resurrection. If we don’t provide an understanding of what resurrection is, then pop
culture will fill in the blanks for us. That’s how we get five year olds who are scared of zombie Jesus.