

So, the obvious question you're probably asking is: why am I in a cemetery?

Many of us spend our lives avoiding these places. They are reminders of death, the limitation of vitality and in some cases, ended dreams. Chances are that most of us have buried a loved one, or at least someone we knew, at some point in our lives and it's probably not a day we would choose to live over again.

But there's another side to all of this. If what we read of Jesus is true, then physical death is not the end. In fact, Jesus promises life to those who will receive it, and that offer still stands today.

But we stand opposed to ourselves. Inside, we desire life and freedom. But there are parts of us—the Bible collectively calls them "the flesh"—that are resistant to surrendering to Jesus and receiving the life he offers. Our flesh is decaying, but our spirit is eternal. We can choose whether we want to follow Jesus by laying down our fear, our need to control, our selfishness, our greed, our lust and all of the other things that obsess us, or whether we want to continue living our life according to our flesh. It feels good, but it is ultimately unfulfilling.

We're going to spend some time here, today, thinking through and processing all of this.

**Take a few minutes right now to talk to God.** Tell him all of the reasons that you're hesitant to surrender your life to him more thoroughly. For some of us, it could be that we don't really believe or aren't convinced enough. For some of us it could be that we've felt burned by someone or by a religious institution before and we've layered that on our view of God. For some of us, it might just be that we're too self-centered to think about others, let alone what God wants. Whatever it is, know that God is not threatened by your hesitations. He is perfectly secure and happy with who he is. Just talk to Him, and spend some time listening.

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**If you've not already done so, now might be a good time to get out of your car and walk around.** If there's a monsoon outside, feel free to stay put.

One thing you'll notice as you look at the dates on various tombstones is the diversity of lives that many of these people had. Some lived long lives, and some died very young. Some spent extravagantly on their grave marker, and some are marked only by a small plaque in the ground that's barely visible through the grass.

In the same way, each of us is at a different place in our experiences with Jesus. Some of us have only recently heard about who He is, and some of us may have been following him for decades. But we are all at a place of seeking. We are looking for something, even if we're not certain what it is.

All of those longings we talked about before—the ones that sometimes become twisted into things like greed and lust and envy—are all longings that are meant to be met in God. It's just that we sometimes want them on our own terms instead of freely receiving what God wants to give us. In order to do that we have to empty ourselves—to die to ourselves—in order to be able to receive the life that Jesus wants to give us.

Jesus said, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." We are to find the answer to all of our longings, all of our desires, all of our hopes, in Jesus. He is ready and willing to give them to us, but first we must die to ourselves.

**Make your way to a grave.** Once you get there, stand in front of it and spend some time consciously telling God the things that you're going to empty yourself of—and die to—so that you can receive the life that he wants to give you.

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**Take a moment to notice the name on the grave in front of you.** This person's body—their flesh—is dead and decomposing. But they live on. Their spirit is eternal. In the same way, if you have just decided to die to certain things in your life, you can leave the remains of your flesh right here. And you can turn around, walk away, and begin to receive the life that God has promised.

**Spend a few minutes right now telling God that you want to receive the life that he has promised through Jesus.** Again, take note of the name that's on the grave marker. Whenever you start to feel those things cropping up again, just remember that name to remind you that you have died to yourself and have received Jesus' life. As you turn around to leave, spend some time thanking God that he loves you, in spite of your confusion, your doubt, your mistakes. He loves you.

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This concludes your week four challenge. On your way home, **spend some time thanking God for his love and ask him to show you ways he has shown love that you've never noticed before.**