

# Can a Christian Talk to the Dead?

*By Rev. D. Earl Cripe, Ph.D.*

**(This article is in the form of a letter that Rev. D. Earl Cripe wrote in response to a question from a friend.)**

My Dear Sister:

The Scripture passage you wanted is in St. Luke's Gospel, chapter sixteen and is cited below. It is from the King James, which is the only Bible I use when I want to be accurate. The Douay-Rheims version of the Latin Vulgate is also dependable. I am sorry that I do not have it in English, but I have given you the Latin version of St. Luke, 16:19-31. I know you cannot read it, but I feel more comfortable citing it for you in case you wish to take my comments up with your priest.

**Luke 16:19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:**

**Luke 16:20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,**

**Luke 16:21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.**

**Luke 16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;**

**Luke 16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.**

**Luke 16:24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.**

**Luke 16:25** But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

**Luke 16:26** And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

**Luke 16:27** Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

**Luke 16:28** For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

**Luke 16:29** Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

**Luke 16:30** And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

**Luke 16:31** And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

You must understand and believe that you are not talking to your departed mate. There is no communication now between those of us still trapped in mortality where time and history still exists and those who have left for the realms of immortality where there is neither time nor history. It is alright to fantasize a little, to take solace in audibly speaking to your departed ones if that comforts you, but it is detrimental and will lead to spiritual, emotional and possible even mental problems if pursued to an unwholesome degree.

The only mediator between God and man in our present state is the man Christ Jesus, according to the Scriptures. In I Timothy 2:5, we read, **“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.”**

In His dialogue with the Pharisees, Jesus made it clear that mortals cannot go to the place where Jesus came from and where God (and where Louie) is. In St. John's Gospel, chapter 8:

**John 8:14** Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.

**John 8:15** Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.

**John 8:16** And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

**John 8:17** It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

**John 8:18** I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.

**John 8:19** Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

**John 8:20** These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

**John 8:21** Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

**John 8:22** Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.

**John 8:23** And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

**John 8:24** I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

**John 8:25** Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.

**John 8:26 I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.**

**John 8:27 They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.**

Here Jesus says that natural man does not know the way to God. It is true that we who have been born again are immortal in Spirit and know God, but we are not yet immortal in body and therefore we cannot contact God with any part of us that is still mortal, and that includes the mind and emotions. There is a redeemed spirit in us that can know God, contact God and talk to Him in prayer, but that, though it is not very well understood by laity of clergy, is not part of what we were born with mortally as a child of Adam. In the Old Testament, and even on occasions, in the New, God did communicate directly with men but that was a case of God coming down into this world, not a case man going up to God. Even St. John, in the revelation, saw only things in allegories and symbols, and they were things that were not lawful to see and hear according to St. Paul in II Corinthians 12:2-5. God makes natural laws and is not limited by them. Even so, He has given us instructions and guidelines by which our lives as Christians in this world are lived and those guidelines tell us that eternity is beyond us and so are those who have been ushered into it.

In I Corinthians, chapter 13:

**I Cor 13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.**

**I Cor 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.**

**I Cor 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.**

**I Cor 13:11** When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

**I Cor 13:12** For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

**I Cor 13:13** And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Your dearly departed and others are in a realm that we can only see afar off now, though one day we will be there also. Christians who have died are alive and with the Lord.

**I Cor 15:12** Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

**I Cor 15:13** But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

**I Cor 15:14** And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

**I Cor 15:15** Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

**I Cor 15:16** For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

**I Cor 15:17** And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

**I Cor 15:18** Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

**I Cor 15:19** If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

**I Cor 15:20** But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

**I Cor 15:21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.**

**I Cor 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.**

**I Cor 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.**

**I Cor 15:24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.**

**I Cor 15:25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.**

**I Cor 15:26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.**

**I Cor 15:27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.**

**I Cor 15:28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.**

**I Cor 15:29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?**

**I Cor 15:30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?**

**I Cor 15:31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.**

**I Cor 15:32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.**

**I Cor 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.**

**I Cor 15:34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.**

**I Cor 15:35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?**

**I Cor 15:36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:**

**I Cor 15:37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:**

**I Cor 15:38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.**

**I Cor 15:39 All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.**

**I Cor 15:40 There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.**

**I Cor 15:41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.**

**I Cor 15:42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:**

**I Cor 15:43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:**

**I Cor 15:44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.**

**I Cor 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.**

**I Cor 15:46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.**

**I Cor 15:47 The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.**

**I Cor 15:48 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.**

**I Cor 15:49 And as we have born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.**

**I Cor 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.**

**I Cor 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,**

**I Cor 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.**

**I Cor 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.**

**I Cor 15:54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.**

**I Cor 15:55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?**

**I Cor 15:56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.**

**I Cor 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**I Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**

When the end comes at the resurrection, we shall be with them. But it is very important, I think, to realize that they are only there in spirit. Neither the body nor the soul has gone to be with the Lord. That will not happen until the resurrection, at which time we will all go to be with the Lord at the same instant, according to I Thessalonians 4:



**I Thess 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.**

**I Thess 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.**

**I Thess 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.**

**I Thess 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:**

**I Thess 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.**

**I Thess 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.**

I have underlined verse 15 because of its importance to the subject. To “prevent,” means to go ahead of. It tells us that the living, when Christ returns, will not see Him or meet Him physically before the righteous dead. The first thing that will happen is that the graves will be opened and the righteous dead will be raised in immortal bodies. Then we who are still alive will also die mortally and put on immortal bodies, but it will be an instantaneous death in which there will be no “sting,” but it will be a death in any case (**I Cor 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed**) for this mortal must go through the process of death and resurrection in order to physically enter the Kingdom of God, which in this case

is the eternal, physical Kingdom, which is the only physical Kingdom of God there is. Do to believe the lie that there will be a physical Kingdom of God on this earth that will be inhabited by those who have not died and been raised in physical immortality. That is a mockery of the Gospel, the Cross and the Resurrection and is impossible according the Bible:

**I Cor 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption...**

**I Cor 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.**

**I Cor 15:54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.**

**I Cir 15:55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?**

The completion of the work, the plan and the journey depends upon our successful carrying out of our duties in this world. The righteous dead are not complete yet in the sense of arriving at the goal God, in the eternity past, has laid out for us, and will not be until God determines that the mission of the Church is complete.

In Hebrews chapter 11, we are told:

**Heb 11:32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:**

**Heb 11:33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.**

**Heb 11:34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.**

**Heb 11:35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:**

**Heb 11:36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:**

**Heb 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;**

**Heb 11:38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.**

**Heb 11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:**

**Heb 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.**

I have underlined verse 40 to show you that the best thing you can do for Christ, who is the head of the Church, yourself who are a soldier in His army, for your church, you family and your friends and for your dear departed, is to apply yourself with diligence to the work of the Kingdom of God. The time will pass and the day will come and you will then see that you have extracted the utmost out of your life, and out of your loved one's life and death. God had a reason for allowing your loved one to be taken and perhaps part of it was to get you to focus on Christ and worship Him instead of your husband, your marriage and the pleasures of this life. There is a better world coming, my sister, and it is not far away for any of us. This is our opportunity to contribute to things of eternal value in that eternal world. Instead of trying to bring you husband back or pretend that is some sense he is still here, spend your time preparing to go to him and to meet judgment day with a glorious life

well lived and in eternal honor to God and benefit to your loved ones and to all the eternal children of God.

There is no biblical question that the departed dead are alive and in a comfortable and blissful situation. In II Corinthians, chapter 5, we read:

**II Cor 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.**

**II Cor 5:2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:**

**II Cor 5:3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.**

**II Cor 5:4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.**

**II Cor 5:5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.**

**II Cor 5:6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:**

**II Cor 5:7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)**

**II Cor 5:8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.**

**II Cor 5:9 Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.**

**II Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.**

**II Cor 5:11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.**

**II Cor 5:12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.**

**II Cor 5:13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.**

**II Cor 5:14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:**

**II Cor 5:15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.**

**II Cor 5:16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.**

**II Cor 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**

**II Cor 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;**

**II Cor 5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.**

**II Cor 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.**

**II Cor 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.**

How then is it possible for the righteous dead to be with the Lord and know that they are with Him now, if we are all going to be with the Lord physically and in soul (or life) at the same time as I Thessalonians 4 tells us? I do not know everything there is to know, as I Cor. 13 has just told us (and I am

sure you already had that figured out), but I will give you something to think about and I hope I am not doing you a disservice by so doing. The righteous dead have left the realm of time and history and gone to be with the Lord where time and History does not exist and never has. In that realm Christ was slain in the counsels of God before the world was created, according the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation, and we were chosen in Him and given eternal life before the world was formed, St. Paul told the young evangelist Timothy. It is possible that in that timeless, eternal realm, that which is future for us has already taken place for them. That would mean that the resurrection, which for time and history is future, is an accomplished fact for those who have left time and history and it would also mean that you and I are already there with them. I do not say that it is true – only that it is possible. Many of the great Catholic and non-Catholic scholars have spoken of the shadow of mortality and how it will one day pass and reveal the eternal reality that lies behind. Anyway, you and I must spend our mortal years in time and history and there is not much mileage and a whole lot of confusion to be had by dwelling too much on such notions. It was this kind of obsession that lead the great thinker Karl Barth into orthodox heresy and ruined his ministry and thousands of young students who were caught in his web. We must look at it fleetingly, derive what comfort there is from it, and pass on. Do not stop to dwell on that which is beyond us in the present time.

There are other scriptures that tell us that mortal demise is the end of the mortal experience and that the dead are no longer in contact with mortality and those who are in it. I will cite some Scriptures for you and as you read them remember that these are not saying the righteous dead are not with God or that they do not know they are there. It is telling us that they are no longer in contact with mortality and the things of Adam and the old creation.

Ecclesiastes, chapter 3.

**Eccl 3:10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.**

**Eccl 3:11 He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.**

Here God has limited the mind of mortal man to this world so that he cannot see beyond it or find out things that are in immortality with God which God has not chosen to reveal to us. Man has sought out many inventions, mental, scientific, and philosophical, but none of them have taken him outside of or beyond this old creation and this mortal world of natural man. So said the wisest humanist that ever lived.

In Psalm 115:

**Psalm 115:15 Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth.**

**Psalm 115:16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.**

**Psalm 115:17 The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.**

**Psalm 115:18 But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.**

Here God has not given heaven to mortal man, to know it or to live in the ambiance of it. This refers to all of that which is mortal in man and that, at the present, refers to our physical person, our natural minds and our emotions.

In Ecclesiastes, chapter 9:

**Eccl 9:4 For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.**

**Eccl 9:5 For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.**

**Eccl 9:6 Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.**

While it is not the message of the passage, it tells us that the dead know nothing any more in the mortal realm and on the mortal, child-of-Adam level. That includes their loves and their emotions.

But the righteous dead are live in spirit and are present possessors of eternal life outside the realm of mortality and this old creation.

In St. Matthews Gospel, chapter 22:

**Matt 22:31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,**

**Matt 22:32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.**

Ditto in Mark 12:

**Mark 12:23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.**

**Mark 12:24 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?**

**Mark 12:25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.**

**Mark 12:26 And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?**

**Mark 12:27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.**



Ditto in Luke 20:

**Luke 20:34** And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage:

**Luke 20:35** But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

**Luke 20:36** Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

**Luke 20:37** Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

**Luke 20:38** For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.

**Luke 20:39** Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said.

**Luke 20:40** And after that they durst not ask him any question at all.

My dear friend, this is a very difficult subject to treat comprehensively and simply. In my 39 years in the ministry, I have performed about 100 memorial services, most of them for Christians. I have never felt very successful at explaining such as there is in the Bible to explain to those who have desperately wanted to know. I have done the best I can for you. I apologize for my inability to be more decisive on this subject but even as I do, I realize that it may not be possible to know more, given the present limitation of our knowledge and experiences.

I hope this helps. Call or write me any time (e-mail or otherwise) and God bless and comfort you is my prayer.

Another soldier in the Lord's Army  
Earl Cripe

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