

Resurrection and Ralph

By [L. Gail Irwin](#)

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I ran into Ralph at the café. Ralph is a retired paper mill worker, a Vietnam vet, and a self-proclaimed “wise sage” who drives everyone in the café crazy with his incessant theological chatter. He always interrupts my sermon preparation. He wants to talk about God or Jesus or numerology or the chickens he’s raising. But most times, I come away from a conversation with him having yielded a little jewel of insight.

This time it was a big one. He helped me figure out the bodily resurrection.

“Do you believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ, Ralph?” I asked him.

“I have to,” he said. So I took this opportunity to ask something I could never ask in front of my parishioners.

“Okay, so, if Jesus rose physically from the dead, with his body, then where is his body now?”

Ralph didn’t skip a beat. “It’s wherever he wants it to be.”

I pondered this. I’m getting older, but I’m proud to say I’m still manufacturing new brain cells. Did he mean Christ’s physical body moves around? Travels the globe? Changes form?

“Ooo . . . do you mean Jesus is like a *shapeshifter*?” I asked, popping out another brain cell or two.

“A *what*?” Ralph squished up his face. Apparently, he hasn’t been reading the *Twilight* series.

“So, you’re saying Jesus’ body can inhabit *your* body?”

“Well, I certainly hope he does,” Ralph said.

“But . . . not all the time. I mean, you’re not Jesus, Ralph.”

“No, that’s true.”

“But maybe now and then, Jesus might inhabit your body and I could get a little glimpse of him by looking at you, just for that split second. Is that what you mean?”

Ralph was just now figuring out what he meant.

“So that explains why, sometimes, when you are with someone, you feel like they’re channeling the Holy Spirit or something. That’s Jesus deciding to put his body in someone else’s body, right?”

“That’s right,” Ralph smiled.

“I can buy that,” I said with satisfaction. Finally, the bodily resurrection made a little sense! There’s probably something deeply heretical about this idea, but if there is, I don’t care. I like it.

And if Jesus can do shapeshifting with his body, I wonder what he can do with that body we call the church.

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