



Unit .31

Easter

From Despair to Joy

Scripture



John 20:11-18

11 But Mary stood outside the tomb, crying. As she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb. **12** She saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus's body had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. **13** They said to her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "Because they've taken away my Lord," she told them, "and I don't know where they've put him." **14** Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus. **15** "Woman," Jesus said to her, "why are you crying? Who is it that you're seeking?" Supposing he was the gardener, she replied,

"Sir, if you've carried him away, tell me where you've put him, and I will take him away." **16** Jesus said to her, "Mary." Turning around, she said to him in Aramaic, "*Rabboni!*"—which means "Teacher." **17** "Don't cling to me," Jesus told her, "since I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." **18** Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them what he had said to her.

Have you ever lost something or someone that you loved?

When facing heartache and grief, what are some ways we can stay anchored in the truth?



99 Essential Doctrines

Christ's Exaltation

Whereas the death of Christ was the ultimate example of His humiliation, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the first and glorious example of Christ's exaltation. Christ was exalted when God raised Him from the dead, and Christ was exalted when He ascended to the Father's right hand. He will be exalted by all creation when He returns. All of these aspects work together to magnify the glory and worth of Christ, resulting in the praise of the glory of His grace in rescuing sinners.

Main Point

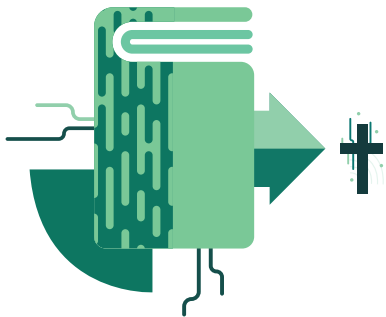
**Jesus' resurrection turns
our sorrow into joy.**

Have you ever misidentified someone? If so, share.

What are some ways you have recognized Jesus' presence and comfort in the painful moments of your life?

How has God used others to comfort you? How can God use you to comfort others?

When we are hurting, what are some unhealthy ways we seek comfort or try to numb our pain?



Christ Connection

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not only the cornerstone of the gospel, but also the source of joy and hope for all believers. Because Jesus died to pay the penalty of sin and rose again, we have good news to share with others.

Our Mission



Head

Do you think of Jesus more as a person from history or someone who is alive today? How might thinking of Jesus as alive and resurrected affect how you live?

When you face painful experiences, how can you make sure they refine your faith instead of killing it?



Heart

How can Jesus' triumph over suffering bring you joy in your sorrows?

When you don't understand what God is up to, what can you do to keep trusting that God knows and loves you?



Hands

How can you tell if you are finding your joy in Jesus or seeking it somewhere else?

How can you share the comfort and joy of Jesus with others in your life?

Daily Devotions



Day 1

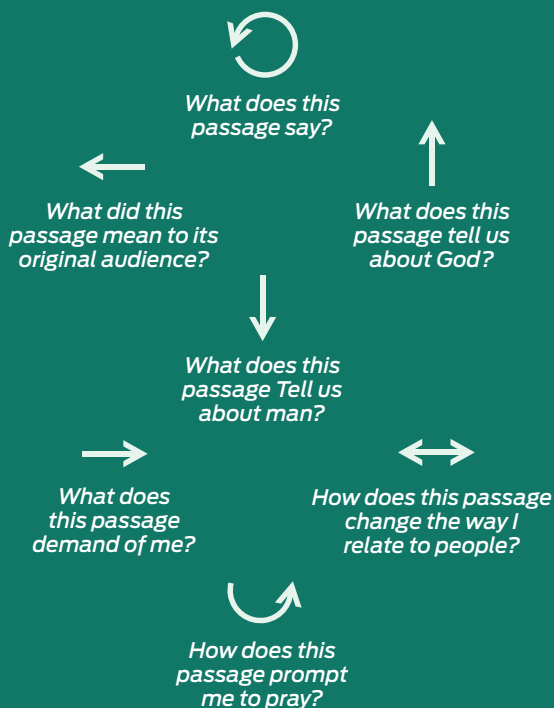
John 20:1-10

The writers of the Gospels did not brush over the blemishes of the early disciples. Instead, they described their real responses to the crucifixion and resurrection. In John 20, we see this with Mary Magdalene, as well as Peter and John, and later Thomas (vv. 24-25).

These forthright descriptions of the first disciples affirm the reliability of the Bible. Someone making up a story would have been more likely to portray themselves as heroes. Instead, we find genuine portraits of the flawed, everyday people whom Jesus called His disciples. This is simply another reason we can rest confidently that the Jesus we follow truly is risen. We can also be encouraged that God can use us, too, in spite of our doubts and flaws.

How does it encourage you to know that the disciples had struggles and doubts, too?

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day 2

John 20:11-13

Neither angels nor an empty tomb were enough for Mary. She still assumed that Jesus' body had been stolen (John 20:2,13). She wanted to be near her Savior, but did not know where His body lay. She was committed to Jesus, and His death brought her to despair.

We are like Mary in a lot of ways, and this instance was no exception. Just as she was failing to live in light of Jesus' resurrection, so often we fail to live as if Jesus has truly risen. We don't walk in hope, but in defeat. Rather than look down in despair, we need to listen for the voice of our living Savior in Scripture.

What steps can you take this week to allow the reality of Jesus' resurrection to affect the way you live each day?

Day 3

John 20:14-16

"My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). This is how Jesus described His followers' capacity to hear His voice and obey it. In John 20:16, we see a concrete example of this. Mary, one of Jesus' precious sheep, heard Jesus say her name, and she knew with certainty that the Good Shepherd was speaking to her.

While Jesus has not verbally called us by name like He did Mary here, we know that God has called us into relationship with Him. Despite the sorrow you may endure in this life, you can trust that the risen Lord will meet you in your moment of despair. His voice brings comfort and hope. Like Mary, once we've heard Jesus say our name, we should feel compelled to respond with joy and obedience.

How can your relationship with Jesus bring you joy even in difficult seasons?

John 20:17-18

“Should I stay or should I go?” Yes, those are the lyrics to the famous song by *The Clash* released in 1982, but it also might have been the question Mary was asking herself as the risen Jesus stood before her. Yet, Jesus, who so often did what seems counterintuitive to us, directed her not to stay, but instead to go.

Isn't it interesting that the woman who was so desperate and downtrodden about the whereabouts of Jesus' body was so willing to leave Him? This is the effect of encountering the risen Jesus. A true disciple wants to be with Jesus, but also wants to share Jesus with others—and that's exactly what Mary did. Recognizing the risen Jesus led her to be on mission for the risen Jesus.

How often does your desire to cling to Jesus lead to the desire to tell others about Him? Are you willing to go anywhere and do anything He tells you to do?

John 20:19-29

Have you ever noticed that most, if not all, of the resurrection appearances recorded in the Gospels take place on the first day of week? This should make our Sunday gatherings all the more meaningful. By joining our brothers and sisters in Christ for corporate worship on “the first day of the week” (John 20:19), we are participating in a tradition that reaches back to the earliest disciples to whom Jesus appeared on that first Easter morning.

Every time we make an effort to meet together with fellow Christians on Sunday mornings, we need to keep in perspective that it is more than just a religious routine. We are gathering to hear from the risen Jesus through word, and confess together, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus' resurrection ignited a movement that continues to blaze to this day. As the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus sends us (John 20:21). We who believe are blessed, and one day our eyes will see Him again. Until that day, let's live with faith.

Are you living the “sent” life that Jesus has called us to? How will you live for Jesus' mission in this season of your life?