

**LEADER GUIDE:****"RESURRECTION CHANGES EVERYTHING" – John 20:1-18**

**Main Point:** Christ's resurrection confronts our doubts and offers hope for those who believe.

**SERIES OVERVIEW:** The Passion of Jesus. During this Easter season, we will walk through some crucial passages to help us step into the pain, suffering, and glory of the resurrected Christ.

**PASSAGE BACKGROUND:** After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He sets His face toward His primary mission: dying in Jerusalem and rising from the dead.

**[NOTE: Please refer to the Sermon Insert Questions from the service program or go online to see the original connecting, understanding, and living questions]**

**CONNECTING:**

Allow your people plenty of time to share. You can learn a lot about your people's personalities, level of faith, and understanding of Scripture by how they answer these connecting questions. Use these connecting questions to understand and diagnose the condition of your flock rather than to teach. Listen more than lead in this section.

**QUESTION #1: What does Easter mean to you? What are the traditions of your family during this season? Why do Christians make so much of Easter?**

**QUESTION #2: Read John 20:1-18. Put yourself in Mary's place. After witnessing Christ's suffering and death, what is your emotional state? Why visit the tomb so early on Sunday morning? What feelings do you have as you see the stone rolled away from the tomb?**

**UNDERSTANDING:**

**QUESTION #1: Compare Mary's doubts with John's belief (John 20:8). How can two people look at the same evidence and come to different conclusions? John "believed" (20:8) but still didn't "understand" (20:9) even after seeing the empty tomb. Why is this significant?**

- Mary believed the body had been stolen. John believed something more miraculous had happened. There are so many variables to how people process the world around them. The most significant is how the Holy Spirit is impacting their hearts and minds. At this time, Mary is

still not yet fully convicted of the gospel, but will soon when she has an encounter with the risen Christ.

- Even though John believed something miraculous had happened - after all, he had seen Jesus calm storms, walk on water, feed 5,000 people with practically nothing – he still did not fully grasp all the aspects of the full gospel. He did not understand the necessity of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.
- This is significant because many of us can be like John at that point in his spiritual journey. We can know that God and Christ exist and even that Jesus died on the cross and something miraculous happened with his tomb, but if we do not have a personal encounter with the living Christ, we may not fully believe and understand the gospel.

**QUESTION #2: Read John 20:11-13. How important is faith? How is faith a “compass” through which we make important decisions of life? Why is the object of our faith more important than the strength, weakness or sincerity of our faith? What do you rely on for evidence that Jesus was raised from the dead?**

- The Bible says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6). It is the entry point into a vibrant, reconciled, and intimate relationship with God as our Father.
- Faith allows us to trust the leading of God by obeying His Word as we make decisions, even when it seems counterintuitive or frightening.
- Our faith often wavers in intensity. When we endure trials our faith is strengthened, but the strengthening process often begins with somewhat of a breakdown of the resolute strength of our beliefs in order to build them back up with even greater strength. A great analogy is the process of building muscle through a weightlifting regimen. The trial of the weights break down muscle fiber in order for them to repair with even stronger and larger fibers. Job’s story is a great example of this process of faith breaking and building. This back and forth process makes the object of our faith more important than the strength of our faith. Jesus does not experience this process of breakdown and rebuilding. He is already complete strong. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. If we put our trust in Him, we are secure, regardless of what season of faith (strong or weak) we are in. This is because He is forever strong.
- Our greatest evidence is the Holy Spirit’s conviction of our hearts when He uses the eyewitness testimony of the early disciples (the written Word of God) to reveal the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

**QUESTION #3: How do you think Mary felt when Jesus called her name (John 20:16)? Why do you think she recognized him when he said her name (John 10:3-4)? Why did Jesus discourage Mary from holding on to him (John 20:17)?**

- Probably a mix of emotions. Joy. Comfort. Relief. Excitement. And probably a brief feeling of embarrassment as she realized her repetitive doubt. When her brother Lazarus died, she was beleaguered with grief and doubt because Jesus had not shown up on time to heal him (John 11:32-33). But then Jesus overwhelmed her doubt when He miraculously raised Lazarus from the dead. And now she is overcome with similar grief and doubt, not believing that Jesus could also rise from the dead as He had said, but must have been forever lost because of the wiles of grave robbers. And then when Jesus tenderly, yet likely with conviction, speaks her name, she must have realized the weakness of her faith. But this embarrassment was quickly overcome by the tender mercy and grace of her Lord (as can be seen in her desire to embrace Him – 20:16-17)
- Mary became a believer by the working of the Holy Spirit in her heart. She was one of God’s children through the work of Christ so she was able to hear His voice like the sheep hear the voice of their shepherd.
- There is some debate as to why Jesus would not let her hold on to Him. Some say it is because Jesus was now in a resurrected, perfected body destined for dwelling in heaven, and that a sinful human being must not “contaminate” such a person. Others suggest that Jesus was trying to help Mary see that things will not go back to the way they were. Jesus always had a mission that led to Him leaving this earth and sending the Holy Spirit to His followers so that they would go out to the world and tell of the gospel...which is exactly what Mary ends up doing (20:18)!

### **LIVING:**

Spend some time discussing these questions. Let your people freely digest what God’s Word is telling them. Make sure to write down important things that are communicated so you can pray for your flock and help them take next steps in their new commitments.

**QUESTION #1: There are ways to grow beyond doubt (John 20:14-16): Connect faith to Bible hope (Hebrews 11:1), face doubt with Bible evidence (Matthew 14:31), and open yourself to a conversation with Jesus (Romans 10:11). Which one appeals to you the most and why?**

**QUESTION #2: How will these things help you place greater trust in Christ’s resurrection? How will faith help you deal with trials in life? How will this passage inspire courage in telling others the good news (John 20:18)?**

- Encourage your people to take next steps toward sharing their faith with others!

## **GOSPEL OPPORTUNITY:**

At this time ask your group to privately reflect if there is anyone who feels like they have never repented and received Christ's forgiveness. Then, share the gospel: 1.) God is our authority (Gen. 1; Rom. 1:18-23) 2.) Each of us have rebelled and sinned against His authority; (Rom. 3:23) 3.) Because of this rebellious sin we are under the penalty of His condemnation and wrath; (Rom. 6:23) 4.) Jesus came to die and rise again to wash away our sins and bear the wrath of God in our place (Rom. 5:6-11) 5.) All we have to do is receive this free gift of grace and eternal life by trusting in Christ alone for our salvation (Rom. 6:23 & 10:9-11). Allow people to share right there with the group that they desire to be saved and then pray over them and have them pray to receive Christ as Savior. Have group members gather around and lay hands on them. Or offer to talk with anyone after group about these things if no one is comfortable to open up in front of the group. Please let me know what happens!! How exciting!!

### ***REVIEW: What were last week's assignments?***

Conclude your time by reviewing what Jesus means by being the "light" (see John 1:9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:35-36). Talk about the way people responded to Jesus in John's day and ours. What is your next step with King Jesus?

### ***REFLECTION: Discuss last week's assignments***

Share about a next step you have taken with Jesus this past week.

### ***NEW Follow Up Assignments:***

Make a "prayer list" of five friends or family members who need hope in Christ. Put them on a card and begin to pray daily for them. Look for ways to pray for them, show compassion and share Jesus with them.

### **NEXT STEPS:**

1. **Question: Have you invited someone new to your group lately?** If not, don't miss the opportunity God gives us over the Christmas and New Years season to meet many new visitors to Stonebridge. Invite them to your LIFE Group!
2. Make sure your roster and attendance are up to date in InFellowship!
3. Have you considered having Brett from Safe Families come to give a presentation at your group yet?