

# Living the Story

## A Study through Scripture

### *Introduction:*

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I am not sure we always get Easter Sunday right. What I mean by that is that we tend to wake up in a celebratory mood, ready to worship a risen Lord. Obviously, on this side of the cross, we understand that as our reality, but in doing this, I wonder if we miss some of the tension of that first Sunday morning after Jesus was crucified.

In each of the gospels, the women head to the tomb to anoint a dead body with the spices and oils traditionally used for funerals. What does that tell us? That they did not wake up thinking, "Today is a great day!" No, they were continuing—finishing up, really—the grieving and burial process. The hopes and dreams of the people had been crushed. They thought things would work out (see the Road to Emmaus story in Luke, for instance), but it didn't. What to do now?

In John's gospel, the text we are using for today, John actually comes right out and tells us what was going on. He writes, "They [the disciples] still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead." (John 20.9) We, who read the story from a post-resurrection perspective, find so many clues that Jesus was going to rise again within the gospels. The disciples did not.

BUT, at some point, when they saw the empty tomb John says, they believed. The light comes on, if you will. The reality of what was to come was suddenly past tense. They moved from grief to bewilderment to fear (see Mark 16.8) to celebration to praise to worship.

At what point do you move from a slight cognitive understanding that there is something special about Jesus to a full-blown belief that is the risen Lord? At what point does it become so different that your life is changed, that you ... well, believe?

### *Summary of the Text:*

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John's translation of the resurrection story begins with one woman going to the tomb where Jesus was buried. John does not tell us that she was going to continue the burial preparations like the other gospel writers do, but we can assume either the desire to anoint Jesus' body was in play here or that a desire to come see where he was buried. It is a time of grieving, regardless of the number of people and the exact purpose for their visit to the tomb.

Mary's experience is quickly relayed to Simon Peter and John (the disciple Jesus loved), who themselves hightail it to the tomb. (In fact, we are told who wins the footrace to the tomb.) When they look in, they see the cloth folded neatly, separate from the linen. And whatever they knew before this point, it was changed, for we are told that John goes in and believes.

Believes what? Obviously, given John's editorial note about the lack of understanding about the need for Jesus to rise again, he believed that Jesus actually did that. I also think he believed the claims that Jesus made about himself as Lord and the Messiah.

As is said about the resurrection, this changes everything. Regardless of what you think about Jesus up to this point, your understanding must somehow incorporate he was killed, but did not stay dead. If Peter and John had simply seen the body of Jesus, still lying in the tomb, our story is over and the whole purpose of the past 28 weeks (for us, and all

### LESSON #28

**Date:** 03/31/2013

**Text:** John 20.1-9

**The Story:** Chapter 27

**The Big Picture:** What a roller coaster of emotions the disciples went through the weekend Jesus was crucified. Grief to wonder to bewilderment to fear to awe to celebration to worship to lives lived differently because of him. Where are you on that continuum?

**Materials Needed:** none

of Christian history for Jesus and the disciples) is moot. Jesus was who he said he was. How do we know? Look, he is not there in the tomb! He said he would rise again and he did. How convincing is that?

For us today, we also miss the point of Easter, more to the point, the power of Jesus' resurrection, when we forget that Jesus death opened a way for us to come to God. Following Jesus is more than just being a member at a specific church. It is about doing a dying of our own and then rising again to live for ... and like ... Jesus. We could not do that without the power of his resurrection. But we have to believe this to be the case. Just like John in that tomb, we have to begin a process where we move toward a life that lives within the reality of a risen Lord. When John writes that he believed, he is not just saying that he mentally assented to what had happened. For John, belief always incorporates action. If you do not act as one who believes, you did not really believe.

So what about us? What was the point when we said: Wow! This changes everything?

*Preparing for the Group Time:*

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As you prepare for this week's lesson, be sure to read all of the gospel accounts of the resurrection of Jesus. They are all similar, but they all have differences. While those differences are important for the telling of each gospel writer's story, they also come together as a whole to form a big picture of what is happening when Jesus rose again.

Also, ask yourself about your own belief. How close are you to John's response of seeing Jesus and believing? How do you see Jesus? How does your belief find form in your life today?

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Lesson #28  
Text: John 20.1-9

### *Lesson Outline:*

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If you had one moment you could enjoy by living it over again, what moment would that be? If you had a mulligan moment, that is, a do-over, what moment would you want to go back and change? How do you handle moments from the past that you continually re-live in your mind, both positive and negative moments?

Read John 20.1-9.

Go through the discussion questions.

Close with a time of prayer.

### *Discussion Questions:*

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Put yourself in the shoes of the disciples on that weekend Jesus was crucified. How do you think you would be feeling as you got up to meet with the other believers Sunday morning? Do you think you would have been tempted to “skip church?” Why or why not?

For many of us, we replay events that did not turn out the way we expected over and over in our minds (a missed opportunity to score the winning basket or run, a second place at some competition, a career choice you did not make, or perhaps even a dating relationship you wish you had or did not have). Do you think the disciples did this? What events that they experienced from the life of Jesus do you think they came back to the most?

What sort of things do you think the disciples held out as proof that they had “won” early, early that Sunday morning?

Given that, how do you think you would have reacted to the news brought by Mary?

You are standing at the entrance of the tomb and look in, seeing what John describes in his gospel. What is your first thought? Your second thought?

In your life, what events have been moments that you “saw and believed?”

As a group, make a list of things that have changed for you—and all followers of Jesus—now that Jesus has returned from the dead. How do you make these things a part of your everyday reality, rather than just items listed on a piece of paper that you believe, but perhaps do not act upon?

### *For the Children:*

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Our children will have been looking at the lesson of the resurrection in class this week. Allow them some time to share what the resurrection story means and why it is important to us. I think it will be beneficial to hear their perspectives.

### *Living the Story:*

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Your assignment this week is to live out the list you have made during the last question of the discussion questions. We all admit that we believe Jesus rose again, but does it make a difference in our lives? Do we live differently or think in different ways because of it? We should.

### *Next Week:*

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Next week we begin looking at the book of Acts, chapters 1-6. We will be in *The Story* chapter 28.