

The Power of the Resurrection – John 20

“I want to know him, and the power of his resurrection...” So the apostle cries out from his Roman “cell” as he endured house arrest in Rome some thirty years after the crowning event of the gospel – the good news of Jesus. Biographies naturally end with an account of the death of their subject. The story of Jesus ends with an empty tomb, and a “hero” who is out and on the loose. Last week I referred to John 19 as the “holy of holies” of the gospels because of the focus of each upon the passion of Jesus on the cross. Let me slightly revise that idea. The crucifixion is like a long, bloody, protracted visit to the bronze altar in the temple. We watch in gruesome detail as the sacrificial victim is dragged to the altar, witness his gory death, and observe the disposal of the body. Now, in a real sense, in the resurrection narrative of John 20, we enter the real “holy of holies” – with the “place where he lay” as a new “mercy seat” literally with angels seated on each side at his head and at his feet. The resurrection is the ultimate catalyst, the empowering event that leaves our lives forever changed – once we have allowed ourselves to be confronted by the reality of it, and of the One who came forth from the tomb. That is key question for your group this week: how has your life really been changed by the historical resurrection of Jesus? On what level and to what degree have you come to know “the power of his resurrection”?

Overview: Chapter 20

- Faith Eclipsed: Mary Comes to the Tomb (20:1-2)
- Faith Dawns: Peter and John Run to the Tomb (20:3-9)
- Faith Shines: Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene (20:10-18)
- From Fear to Courage: Jesus Appears to the Disciples (20:19-23)
- From Unbelief to Confidence: Jesus Appears to Thomas (20:34-29)
- From Death to Life: The Bottom Line of the Story (20:30-31)

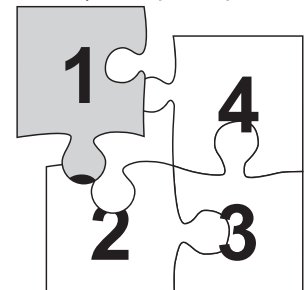
Leader Preparation

Read John 20 several times, using different translations if possible. The resurrection accounts in the four gospels have been repeatedly noted for their “discrepancies.” You would probably be doing well to read each of the gospel accounts of the resurrection and then compare and contrast them. Then, returning to John 20, explore why John includes what he does – what seems to be important to him as he tells the story of the resurrection? List the practical applications you see from the chapter, highlighting what you see as the top three. Commit the chapter in prayer to the Lord, asking him to bring out the truths in your group discussion that he wishes to highlight and drive home.

Suggested Group Activities

- Here’s a thought. You could start your group experience by paralleling the experience of Mary and the other women who came to the tomb early that morning. Tell your group you’re going to start a bit differently. Have a single, lit candle in the center of the room and dim the other lights. Read John 20:1 “Early on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb...” and then, as a group, sit in contemplative, silent prayer for a few minutes. You can conclude the silence with some quiet worship, or perhaps by reciting a Psalm in prayer (Psalm 60:1-4 might work well or Psalm 61:1-8 for starters). Then you can read “the rest of the story” in John – the empty tomb and grave clothes, disciples running,

Weekly Discipleship Track



1. Life reflection – need for change, hunger for God
2. Presentation of truth – teaching and studying
3. Processing the truth – reflection and debrief in community
4. Life change – response to truth, new habits and actions

Jesus appearing...—then blow the candle out, turn on the lights, and celebrate the resurrection in worship.

Some Choice Questions

Here are three questions that might prove worthwhile to ask and explore with your group:

- With which character in John 20 do you most closely identify, and why? a. Mary Magdalene b. Peter and John c. the eleven disciples behind closed doors d. Thomas As you explore this together, really press into what was making these different characters “tick.” Where were they coming from? Why did they do what they did?
- How has your life, practically speaking, been impacted by the resurrection of Jesus? What is the evidence that Jesus is alive in your life today? (You might direct the group to a reading of Philippians 3 or 1 Corinthians 15 to highlight the importance and power of the resurrection.)
- Three times Jesus says to his disciples, “Peace to you.” Where could you use Jesus’ peace right now: in some relationship? In dealing with some inner fear or worry? In your home? In your work?

Quote of the Week

“Friends, let me go over the Message with you one final time – this Message on which you took your stand and by which your life has been saved. (I’m assuming now that your belief was the real thing and not a passing fancy, that you’re in this for good and holding fast.) The first thing I did was place before you what was so emphatically placed before me: that Messiah died for our sins, exactly as Scripture tells it; that he was buried; that he was raised from death on the third day, again, exactly as Scripture says; that he presented himself alive to Peter, then to his closest followers, and later to more than five hundred of his followers all at the same time...that he then spent time with James and the rest of those he commissioned to represent him; and that he finally presented himself alive to *me*...”

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 **The Message**