

## SESSION 6

# Jesus Rose Again to Give Me Life



### QUESTION 1:

*What's the most memorable thing  
you've experienced at a funeral?*

## THE POINT

Jesus's resurrection offers eternal life for me.

## THE PASSAGE

John 20:1-2,11-18

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

My wife Candace and I had not been at our current church long when one of our charter members passed away. She was one of the more influential members, so her funeral was a pretty big deal for our church. In preparing to attend the service, Candace was helping our oldest son get dressed and ready. As any good mom would do, she was also prepping him on to what to say and do. She told our son about the receiving line and how, when it was his turn to speak to the family, he should say, "I am sorry for your loss." In a mixture of confusion and frustration, he immediately responded with, "Why should I be sorry? I didn't kill her."

We got a good laugh out of his innocent response, but death is no laughing matter. It strikes the young and the old. No one escapes its earthly grip. However, the good news for believers is that it is not the last word. Jesus Christ conquered death, and through faith in Him, we have eternal life.

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## John 20:1-2

**1** The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

**2** Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

Over the course of this study, we have been looking at different encounters with Jesus. Each has shown us something powerful and amazing about Jesus. However, the encounter we are studying in this session is perhaps the most amazing. The encounter Mary Magdalene had with Jesus not only transformed her life, but it can also transform ours.

At church we occasionally sing the beautiful hymn “Because He Lives.” I have found that it is loved by both students and people in their nineties. The song speaks of both the power of the resurrection and its impact on our lives and captures the significance of what Mary Magdalene experienced on that Sunday morning. It is the empty grave that makes *all* the difference.

We are unsure exactly when Mary first encountered Jesus, but both Mark and Luke tell us she was possessed by seven demons that Jesus cast out (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). It was clear this early encounter changed her life, for she became a follower of Jesus, often traveling with Him and the disciples in their ministry. Mary had a lot to be thankful for, so it is no wonder she felt the need to get to the tomb early on that Sunday morning. When the Sabbath was over and before the sun had even risen, she made her way to the tomb. Other women accompanied Mary (Mark 16:1), but the Gospel writer John focused on Mary's encounter with Jesus—and

that encounter began with a discovery that something was out of place. The stone had been rolled away.

I had a suite mate in college who was extremely particular about the way he kept his room. He did not like anyone to go into his room or touch any of his things. If he left for the weekend, he would vacuum the carpet to the door so that he could tell if anyone had walked on it. He placed a Hot Wheels® car on his desk, and if anyone opened the drawer, the car would move and he would know someone had been in his desk. He always knew when something was out of place.

Mary did not need a Hot Wheels car at the tomb to know something was out of place. The stone had been moved! John did not give us all the detail between this discovery and her report back to the disciples, but it is clear she was not thinking about resurrection. Even though Jesus had told the disciples several times that He would be killed and then rise from the dead, those words seem to have escaped them. Mary's first thought was that someone had taken the body of Jesus. For her, this was the most realistic understanding of the situation. No one goes to a graveyard expecting to see someone rise from the grave, but this is exactly what happened.

#### **QUESTION 2:**

***What questions come to mind when you consider the empty tomb?***

## John 20:11-16

**11** But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

**12** And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

**13** And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

**14** And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

**15** Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

**16** Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

When I read this section of John's Gospel, Psalm 30:5 always comes to mind. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Mary was crying over the loss of Jesus's body, but her weeping was about to turn to joy as she experienced the surprise of her life. Jesus was alive!

In 2016 I was part of a mission trip to a country in Southeast Asia. I had been to both Africa and Europe several times, but I had never had any desire to go to this part of the world. Frankly, I was not too keen on going at all, but I had been asked by a good and respected friend, and I didn't want to disappoint him. However, when I arrived after twenty hours of travel, no one was there to pick me up. I managed to get myself to the hotel. Needless to say, the trip did not start off well, and my attitude was certainly reflective of those challenges. But by the end of the week, after ministering to and training local pastors, my attitude had

completely changed. I have been back three times. Everything I thought turned out to be the opposite. This was Mary's experience. She assumed the worst only to find out the best.

### **QUESTION 3:**

***When have you had an encounter with God that you didn't recognize at first?***

I love the detail John gave about what Mary saw when she looked into the tomb. She saw "two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." The angels sitting on both ends of where Jesus lay would have looked similar to the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. Moses described it this way:

And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be (Ex. 25:18-20).

Just as the people of Israel would experience the mercy of God at the temple, we experience the grace of God as we look to the empty grave and the risen Savior.

Mary was not sure what to make of what she was seeing. Even when she turned and saw Jesus, she did not recognize him. It was not until He called her by name that she saw Him for who He is. There is something powerful about being called by your name. What a scene! The man she had seen killed on Friday was now calling her name on Sunday.

**QUESTION 4:**

***What are some ways you've heard others respond to the resurrection of Jesus?***

**ENGAGE**

***Imagine what Mary thought and felt when she heard the living, resurrected Lord Jesus call her by name. In the space below, write a short journal entry from the perspective of Mary.***

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**John 20:17-18**

**17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.**

**18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.**

“Touch me not.” When we find something of great value, the natural desire is to hold on to it tightly, to cling to it. It seems from the text that Jesus was rebuking Mary and was coming across as

untouchable, but we know from His ministry that Jesus was very approachable. Jesus was about to ascend into heaven and would no longer be with her physically. He did not want her to rely simply on His physical presence (although He was fully and physically present there outside the grave). Mary would now rely on Jesus in a different way as He came to live in her through the presence of His Holy Spirit.

It is also interesting that Jesus's next words were for her to go and share the good news of His appearance with others. The gospel is not for us to cling to like a top-secret message meant only for ourselves. It is to be shared and spread across the entire world. His glory and power are not in limited supply so that when it is shared it decreases in portion. In fact, the more we share Christ with others, the more we experience His power and presence in our own lives.

We have the only message of hope available to humanity, and we ought to be sharing it with others.

- ▶ “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).
- ▶ “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20).

It should not surprise us that the first directive Jesus gave Mary was for her to go and tell others that she has seen the risen Lord. There is not a more important message in all the world than this one.

Another important part of Jesus's statement to Mary was that “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” The distinction between the use of “my” and “your” is meaningful. Jesus has a unique relationship as the only Son from the Father (John 1:14), and while we are not sons of God in the same way as Jesus, “ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26). We have a relationship with the Father through the Son—and only through the Son.



Notice the immediate response of Mary. Jesus instructed her to go and tell, and she went and told! When Jesus calls us to go, we must go. When He calls us to tell, we must tell. Delayed obedience is disobedience.

I recently took a group of pastors from Ohio on a discovery partnership trip to Europe. The purpose of the trip was to connect these pastors to International Mission Board missionaries working on the field. It was an incredible trip as we spread out across the cities of London and Prague. We prayer-walked, evangelized, and served in a variety of ministry capacities, but the best part was spending time hearing about the work these missionaries were doing. As we debriefed our experience, it was clear that taking the gospel from our neighborhoods to the nations had to become a higher priority in each of our churches.

God calls all His followers to be His witnesses, but we don't witness alone. Jesus's ascension set the stage for the coming of the Holy Spirit as recorded in the book of Acts. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). It is this same Spirit who indwells believers today and empowers us to share the same message that Mary was sent to tell the disciples: Jesus is alive!

#### QUESTION 5:

***What steps can our group take to be better witnesses for Christ?***

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## LIVE IT OUT

What will you do as a result of this study?

- ▶ **Trust Christ.** Knowing the truth of the resurrection of Christ is not enough. Commit to Him, trusting Him by faith. Turn to the inside front cover of this book where you can read the greatest message of hope that has ever been shared. Talk to someone about your desire to follow the resurrected Christ.
- ▶ **Pray and share.** Write down the names of three people you know who need to hear the gospel. Pray daily for these three people and ask God for the opportunity to share the gospel with them soon.
- ▶ **Go and tell.** Pray for our missionaries and consider the possibility of going on a short-term mission trip. Nothing will increase your fervor for seeing people come to know Jesus more than being part of a short-term mission trip. If your church is not planning any trips in the near future, visit the International Mission Board ([imb.org/go](http://imb.org/go)) and review the short-term opportunities listed there.

