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# The Gospel of John: Behold the Man

John 20:1-18

Pastor Brad Wood

In this message on John 20, we discuss the profound mystery and joy of Christ's resurrection. The passage takes us through the raw emotions of Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John as they discover the empty tomb. We're reminded that intellectual faith alone isn't enough – we need an experiential encounter with the risen Christ. Just as Jesus called Mary by name, transforming her despair into elation, He calls each of us personally.

This message challenges us to move beyond mere knowledge about Jesus to a deep, life-changing relationship with Him. Are we satisfied with an empty tomb, or are we longing for a personal encounter that will drive us to share the good news with others? The symbolism of baptism is beautifully tied to this narrative, representing our own death to sin and resurrection to new life in Christ. This Easter story isn't just history – it's an invitation for each of us to experience the transformative power of the risen Savior in our lives today.

5-Day Devotional and Small Group Guide

# Day 1: The Power of Being Known by Name

Reading: John 20:11-18

Devotional: In the depths of her grief, Mary Magdalene encountered the risen Christ. Yet in her sorrow, she didn't recognize Him until He called her by name. How profound that the Creator of the universe knows us intimately and calls us personally. Today, reflect on the times you've felt God calling you by name. Perhaps it was through a scripture that suddenly came alive, a moment of clarity in prayer, or an unexpected word of encouragement. Remember that just as Jesus sought out Mary in her despair, He seeks us out in our darkest moments. His voice can pierce through our grief, confusion, and doubt. Take time to listen for His voice today, calling you by name, reminding you of His love and presence in your life.

# Day 2: From Intellectual Faith to Experiential Belief

Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Devotional: The disciples' initial reaction to the empty tomb was one of intellectual curiosity rather than joyful belief. They saw the evidence but didn't yet understand its implications. How often do we approach our faith this way - knowing the facts but not fully experiencing the transformative power of the resurrection? Today, consider areas in your life where you might have an "intellectual faith" rather than an experiential one. Are there truths about God that you know in your head but haven't fully embraced in your heart? Ask God to move you from mere knowledge to a living, breathing faith that impacts every area of your life. Seek opportunities to experience God's presence and power, not just learn about Him.

# Day 3: Hope in the Midst of Despair

Reading: Psalm 30

Devotional:  Mary Magdalene and the disciples experienced deep sorrow after Jesus' crucifixion. Their hopes were crushed, and they couldn't see beyond their grief. Yet in their darkest hour, hope was about to dawn. Reflect on times in your life when you've felt hopeless. How did God meet you in those moments? Remember that even when we can't see it, God is working behind the scenes. The resurrection reminds us that our darkest Friday can turn into a glorious Sunday. Today, if you're facing challenges or disappointments, cling to the hope of the resurrection. Trust that God can bring life out of death, joy out of sorrow, and hope out of despair.

# Day 4: The Transformative Power of Encountering Christ

Reading: Acts 9:1-19

Devotional: Mary's encounter with the risen Christ transformed her from a grieving follower to a joyful witness. Similarly, Saul's encounter on the Damascus road changed him from a persecutor to a passionate apostle. When we truly encounter Jesus, we cannot remain the same. Consider your own journey with Christ. How has knowing Him changed you? What areas of your life still need to be transformed by His presence? Today, pray for a fresh encounter with Jesus. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you in new ways, to challenge your assumptions, and to empower you to live more fully for Him. Remember, transformation is often a process - be patient with yourself and open to His work in your life.

# Day 5: Sharing the Good News

Reading: Matthew 28:16-20

Devotional: After encountering the risen Christ, Mary Magdalene immediately ran to share the news with others. Her experience compelled her to witness. As followers of Jesus, we too are called to share the good news of His resurrection and love. Reflect on your own testimony - how has Jesus changed your life? Who in your life needs to hear this message of hope? Today, pray for opportunities to share your faith with others. This doesn't always mean formal evangelism; sometimes it's simply living in a way that reflects Christ's love and grace to those around you. Ask God for courage to be His witness in your daily life, and for wisdom to know how to share His love effectively with others.

# Small Group Guide: The Significance of Truth

## Key Takeaways:

1. The disciples initially struggled to understand the resurrection, moving from confusion and despair to intellectual belief.
2. Mary Magdalene's encounter with Jesus demonstrates the power of experiential faith over mere intellectual knowledge.
3. The resurrection proves Jesus' divinity and gives assurance of our own future resurrection.
4. There's a significant difference between knowing about Jesus intellectually and experiencing Him personally.

## Discussion Questions:

* How do you think you would have reacted if you were one of the disciples discovering the empty tomb? Why?
* Pastor Brad mentions the difference between intellectual faith and experiential faith. How would you describe this difference in your own words?
* Mary recognized Jesus when He called her by name. How has Jesus "called your name" in your life? Share an experience where you felt His personal touch.
* Why do you think the disciples went home after seeing the empty tomb, while Mary stayed and encountered Jesus?
* How does the reality of the resurrection impact your daily life and faith?
* Pastor Brad mentions several implications of the resurrection (e.g., Jesus declared as Son of God, assurance of our resurrection, Jesus' continuing ministry). Which of these impacts you the most and why?
* What obstacles might prevent us from moving from intellectual faith to experiential faith?

## Practical Applications:

1. **Prayer**: Choose one of God's promises from the Bible that resonates with you. Write it down, pray over it, and place it somewhere you'll see it daily as a reminder of God's faithfulness.
2. **Reflection:** Spend time this week intentionally seeking a personal encounter with Jesus through prayer and meditation on Scripture.
3. **Scripture Study:** Commit to memorizing a Scripture passage about the resurrection (e.g., 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 or Romans 1:4) to reinforce the importance of this truth in your life.
4. **Accountability:** Partner with someone in the group to encourage each other in pursuing and living out God's truth this week.
5. **Thankfulness:** Each day this week, thank God for His truth revealed in Jesus Christ. Ask for His help in living out the truth and sharing it with others.
6. **Service:** Practice sharing your faith with someone this week, focusing on the truth of who Jesus is and what He's done in your life.

## Further Discussion Questions:

* How might our understanding of Jesus' resurrection change if we approach it with both intellectual knowledge and experiential faith, as described in the sermon?
* In what ways can we relate to Mary Magdalene's grief and despair, and how might her encounter with the risen Jesus inspire hope in our own lives?
* How does the concept of Jesus calling us 'by name' impact our personal relationship with Him, and what might that look like in our daily lives?
* What are some practical ways we can move beyond an 'intellectual faith' to truly experience the presence and power of the risen Christ?
* How might the disciples' initial confusion and disbelief about the resurrection challenge or encourage us in our own faith journey?
* In what ways does baptism serve as a public declaration of our faith, and how might it deepen our commitment to following Jesus?
* How can we cultivate a sense of expectancy and openness to encountering Jesus in our everyday lives, similar to Mary's persistence at the tomb?
* What role does Scripture play in our understanding and experience of the resurrection, and how can we deepen our engagement with it?
* How might the transformation of the disciples from confusion to conviction inspire us to persevere in our faith, even in times of doubt or uncertainty?
* In what ways can we, like Mary, become messengers of the good news of Jesus' resurrection to those around us?

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