

PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!

questions

Read John 20:1-9 – *The Empty Tomb*

1. What was Mary *expecting* to find when she went to Jesus' tomb early Sunday morning and why was she upset by what she *did* find (20:1-2)?

Mary was expecting to find the body of Jesus in the tomb with the stone still sealing the tomb. Instead she found the stone rolled back. The tomb was quarried out of the rock, and an expensive tomb like Joseph of Arimathea's would have been sealed with a disc-like stone which was rolled down a sloping groove across the door. Thus, while relatively easy to close, it would require several strong men to open it. Mary is alarmed at the implications. She fears the tomb has been plundered either by the Jewish authorities or grave robbers.

- ♥ For what purpose did Mary and the other women (20:2) go to the tomb so early in the morning (Mark 16:1; Matthew 27:59-61)?
- ♥ Who else was concerned about Jesus' body and what measures were taken to secure the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66)?
- ♥ Even though women were considered to be "second-class citizens" in Jesus' day, all four Gospels state that the women involved in Jesus' life were the first to discover the empty tomb. What does this reveal to you about God, his view of women, as well as the women who were drawn to the tomb?

God does not show favoritism. People judge my outward appearance, but God looks at the heart – a person's thoughts and intentions (1 Sam. 16:7). Men and women are equal in God's sight and it is the heart condition that determines how he evaluates and views a person. The women wanted to come to take care of Jesus body because of how much he meant to them. He loved and cared for them as no other man in their time would do. They wanted to show their gratitude, love and respect.

2. When Peter and the other disciple entered the tomb, what specific items did they discover (20:3-7)? Strips of linen laying there and the burial cloth, folded and laying to the side.

3. John (the *other disciple* 20:2-3) is credited as the first disciple to believe in the resurrection. Why would what he saw in the tomb cause him to believe that Jesus was alive (20:4-5, 8)?

John's believing is related to seeing the graveclothes. In general the scene is orderly and calm, lacking evidence of the violence and disturbance which would be evident if the authorities or grave robbers had been to the tomb. More significant is the way the linen cloths are lying. What John appears to have seen was the clothes which had been wrapped around Jesus' body lying as if still enfolding the body, with the spices adhering to them, and the head turban a little distance away. They appear undisturbed, as though Jesus' body had simply passed through them. Theologian John Stott uses a vivid image to suggest what the disciples saw was "like a discarded chrysalis from which the butterfly has emerged." This was unlike Lazarus, who was merely restored to physical life after death, and so had to be freed from his graveclothes (John 11).

- ♥ What different conclusion might John have come to if he saw nothing in the tomb? Why? If nothing had been found in the tomb, the disciples would thought that grave robbers or the authorities had stolen and moved Jesus' body – grave clothes and all.

- ♥ The burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head was *folded up* and *laying to the side* (20:7). Can you think of some reasons why John thought it important to include these details?

The Amplified Bible says: 7 But the burial napkin (kerchief) which had been around Jesus' head, was not lying with the other linen cloths, but was [still] rolled up (wrapped round and round) in a place by itself.

The headcloth still retained the shape that the contour of Jesus' head had given it and that it was separated from the other wrappings by a space that suggested the distance between the neck of the deceased and the upper chest, where the wrappings of the body would have begun. A robber would not have left the graveclothes in good order. He would have stripped the body completely, leaving the clothing in a disorderly heap; or he would have taken the body, graveclothes and all.

- ♥ What is your proof that Jesus rose from the dead?

4. Do you think it was a good thing that the disciples didn't understand that Jesus would rise from the dead before he did (20:9)? Why or why not?

As far as having "proof" that Jesus had risen from the dead, it was probably better that the disciples experienced the surprise and then put it all together later. It is obvious that they did not make up a resurrection story to fit their preconceived ideas of prophecy in Scripture or even Jesus' words to them that he would rise again. If the disciples had been expecting the resurrection, the story would have unfolded much differently. God, in His wisdom, did not let them understand until later.

- ♥ What do you think would have changed about the resurrection story if the disciples *had* understood what Scripture said about Jesus rising from the dead (20:9)?

This is just speculation – but maybe they would have never left the tomb, even for the Sabbath. Maybe they wouldn't even have buried Jesus. Perhaps they would have reacted differently at the crucifixion. Many things could have changed.

Read **John 20:10-18** – *Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene*

5. Read **Luke 8:1-3**, **Mark 15:40**, and **Luke 7:41-43** to better understand Mary's relationship to Jesus. Why do you think Mary remained alone at the tomb after John and Peter left for home?

Since we all have probably lost someone that we loved, Mary's feelings are easy for us to relate to. Luke tells us that Jesus had delivered Mary from evil spirits and she had traveled with Jesus, taking care of his needs out of her own pocket, because of her gratitude. She also stayed during the crucifixion, when most everyone else fled. She was indebted to Jesus for a lot, so she loved him a lot. No doubt, she stayed at the tomb to continue in her grief and to reflect on all Jesus had done for her. This was truly a nightmare situation for her. All her dreams and hopes were dashed.

- ♥ At the empty tomb, would you have responded more like Mary or more like the Peter and John? Why?

- ♥ Over what loss have you recently shed tears?

6. When Jesus first appeared, what could be some reasons why Mary didn't recognize him (20:14-15)?

First, Mary did not expect Jesus to be alive. That alone would have prevented recognition. But more than that, Jesus had passed through death to a new order in the glory of God the Father's presence. He had his new, glorified body (just as we will have one day) and it was very different from the body he had while living on earth. It is not surprising that he was not recognized right away. He also could have prevented Mary from recognizing him.

7. Why do you think Mary immediately knew who Jesus was when he spoke her name? **John 10:3-5** may help you in your answer. This, without a doubt, is one of the most beautiful moments in all of the Gospels. Jesus speaks Mary's name and immediately she knows who he is. We all respond in a special and unique way to our personal name being spoken. We also respond to the **way** it is spoken, which often identifies the speaker. No one else would say Mary's name the way Jesus did. This shows the personal relationship Mary had with Jesus and since Jesus' sheep know his voice as he calls them by name, it also speaks of the personal relationship Jesus wants with each one of us. He calls each of us by our personal name in a way that no one else does!

- ♥ Have you ever heard Jesus call you by name? What effect did it have on you? Why?
- ♥ When has Jesus met you at your point of need as he did Mary? What happened? Did it change your relationship with Jesus? How so?
- ♥ If Jesus asked you the two questions he asked Mary in **20:15**, what would be your answers?

8. How does Mary respond to recognizing Jesus and what does Jesus ask her to do (**20:16-17**)?

Mary cries out **Rabboni or Teacher!** and she probably bows before Jesus and clasps his feet (which would be a common thing to do in that day.)

Jesus does not tell Mary not to touch him (as some translations say), but rather not to keep holding on to him or clinging to him. This could be for two reasons: 1) He was saying that I'm not leaving for my final return to the Father yet, so you will see me again and you don't have to hold on to me as if you won't see me again. Or 2) he was helping Mary realize that she would be relating to him in a different way now. It won't be by touch and sight, but rather an inner faith-union with Jesus by the Spirit, that she would share with all believers.

Jesus tells her to go to his brothers (disciples) and tell them that Jesus is returning to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God. Mary becomes the first "missionary" as she runs and tells the disciples "I have seen the Lord!" and shares her story of what Jesus has done for her with them.

- ♥ When have you been tempted to hold on to something good rather than share it with others?
- ♥ We, like Mary, are called to go from our encounter with Jesus and tell others the good news. Are you willing to share with others about your relationship with Christ? What might prevent you?
- ♥ Mary was a devoted Christ follower whose life was changed by Jesus. Her love and devotion were a response to having her sins forgiven and her very life transformed by the Son of God. How have you been changed by Jesus? What has He done in your life?

9. In **John 11**, we have the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead. What are some ways that Jesus' resurrection is different from the one Lazarus experienced?

Lazarus did not receive a new body when Jesus raised him from the dead. He had the same body he had when he died, just healed and made alive again. Lazarus also died again at some point, as we all will. Jesus new resurrection body never died again. Instead, he ascended to heaven in it. We also see the difference in their resurrections by the graveclothes of each. Jesus passed through his burial cloths, but Lazarus was still bound by his. Obviously, these two resurrections were very different.

Read **John 20:19-23** – *Jesus Appears to His Disciples*

10. Considering the circumstances, what was so appropriate about Jesus' greeting to the disciples in **20:19**? The disciples were afraid – the doors were locked for fear of the authorities. When Jesus passes through the walls and suddenly appears, the disciples would have been even more afraid. Jesus' words, "Peace be with you!" were very appropriate because that is exactly what they needed! ("Peace" is the word **shalom** and it means "well-being" in its fullest sense.)

- ♥ When have you been afraid to follow Jesus openly? When this is the case, what might Jesus say to you?
- ♥ Where could you use Jesus' peace right now? Do you think it is available? How might you receive it?

11. What evidence did Jesus present to his disciples to prove he was really the Crucified One (**20:20**)?

Jesus showed them his hands (nail scars) and his side (where the spear had pierced him). Jesus resurrection body is different, but it not "ghostly" or just "spiritual". It is a real body and the scars show the connection between Jesus' physical, earthly life and his new body (just as it will with us someday).

12. What is the significance of Jesus keeping his wounds in his resurrection body (**Isaiah 53:5**)?

It is very significant that Jesus is recognized by his scars – the evidence of what he did for us. It is by his wounds that we are healed and forgiven. The important fact is not that Jesus died and rose again. Rather, it is that when he died, he took upon himself the punishment of our sins. By rising from the dead, he showed his victory over sin and death – a victory that becomes ours as we trust in Him.

♥ How were Jesus' wounds a source of hope to the disciples as they huddled together? How might your wounds become a source of hope to others?

13. What connection do you see between Jesus' *commission* to the disciples in **20:21** and his *gifts* to them in **20:21-22**?

Jesus tells his disciples that just as the Father sent him into the world, so he now is sending his disciples into the world. Most of the world will not take kindly to what the disciples have to share but Jesus does not leave them without powerful resources. First, he again gives them his **Peace** which they will need when they come into conflict with the world. No matter what situation or circumstance they find themselves in, they will have the **Peace of Christ** within them. Secondly, he gives them the power of the **Holy Spirit** so that they can do the job Jesus has given them to do. The Spirit is the Life-breath of the Risen Lord. He is Christ Himself in all the power of the Resurrection. The disciples will need **peace** and **power** as they go into the world to share the Good News.

♥ To whom has Jesus sent you? Has he adequately equipped you? How so?

♥ Have you received the gift of the Holy Spirit? If so, how has it changed you?

14. Jesus died so that we might receive forgiveness of sins. Describe how being forgiven and forgiving others go hand and hand (**Matthew 5:43-45 and 6:12, 14-15**).

Forgiveness always has two sides, just like a coin, and you cannot separate one side from the other. We cannot experience God's forgiveness for our sins if we do not forgive others when they sin against us. This is not optional. God says it is impossible. If we want to be forgiven, we must forgive others.

♥ When is it most difficult for you to forgive others? Why?

♥ How does experiencing Jesus' forgiveness of your sins make it easier to forgive others their sins?

Too often we know Jesus' forgiveness only in our "heads" with understanding. When we really experience it in our hearts by realizing the awfulness of our own sin and what Jesus did in order to forgive us and we experience his forgiveness and cleansing, we can't help but forgive what others have done to us. Out of gratitude and trust, we will release the ones who have wronged us to God. We will trust him to make things right in His time and His way. If forgiving others is difficult, the place to start is to focus on how much we have been forgiven, not on trying harder to forgive someone.

Read John 20:24-31 – Jesus Appears to Thomas

15. Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus first came to them. How does Thomas respond when the other disciples told him they had seen Jesus (**20:25**)? What might Thomas have been feeling that led him to respond as he did?

Thomas would not believe what the others told him unless he saw and experienced for himself. Perhaps he was feeling a little left out – or maybe even a little perturbed that Jesus had made an appearance when he wasn't there! After all, Jesus could have come at a time when Thomas was present. But, it also could be that Thomas wasn't really hanging out with the other disciples. Maybe he wasn't there because he had more or less resumed normal life. He may have only occasionally dropped in on the disciples.

♥ When do you most deserve the *Doubting Thomas Award*?

♥ Are you one who readily believes the spiritual experiences of others or are you more of a skeptic who needs to see and experience for yourself?

♥ How is Thomas' response similar to Mary's, Peter's and John's at the empty tomb? How is it different? Mary, Peter and John also needed evidence to believe that Jesus risen from the dead. They wanted to see the evidence for themselves. Mary didn't believe until she actually saw Jesus and he spoke her name. We don't know when Peter came to belief. Thomas was really not that much different from anyone else. He wanted to see for himself. However, even though several had seen Jesus and he was told all the details of the story, he refused to believe until he experienced the same thing. Sometimes we have to believe on the evidence that someone else presents. Thomas had time to think and reflect on all he heard and to remember what Jesus had said before he died. There was certainly enough evidence to come to belief.

16. When Jesus appeared to Thomas, do you think it was Jesus' *appearance*, his *words*, or his *scars* that convinced Thomas of his resurrection and identity (20:26-28)? Why? Why are each of these important? Jesus' appearance was important because it showed he was alive and that he had a resurrected body (that could pass through locked doors.) His words are important because it showed he knew the disciples and knew what they needed. They also would have recognized his voice, just as Mary did. He also was able to give them further instructions. Jesus' scars were important because it proved his identity. There was no doubt that it was the Jesus they all knew who was standing before them.

♥ What doubts or questions about God are you struggling with? How do you deal with your doubts? Do you take them to Jesus or do you pretend they don't exist?

♥ Do you think Thomas' doubt angered Jesus? Why or why not? Jesus is not angered by our doubts and we all have doubts about our faith at one time or another. The important thing is what we do with or about our doubts. Do we become cynical and unbelieving, or do we take our doubts to Jesus and his Word so that he may speak to them? Do you think it is all right to have doubts about your faith? Can you think of any ways that doubting would be beneficial? Doubts can be beneficial if they cause us to investigate and discover the truth. Jesus never expects us to believe without "thinking."

♥ What *did* it take for you to believe in Jesus? Or, what *will* it take for you to believe in Him?

17. How does Thomas respond to Jesus in **John 20:28**? What was it like and how did you feel when you first believed that Jesus was your Lord and God? Do you feel the same way now? Why or why not? My Lord and My God!

♥ What personal message from Jesus to you do you see in **20:29**? Blessed are those who haven't seen me and believe anyway! We all fall into this category – Jesus calls us blessed! How does this make you feel? Compare Jesus' words with **1 Peter 1:8-9**. Is this your experience? Why or why not? Knowing Jesus and having a personal relationship with him should fill us with inexpressible joy!

Response

John 20:30-31 - Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. **But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

- Share with your group what *words, events* or *dialogue* in **John 20** you find most convincing in supporting John's dual purpose for writing this gospel?
- If you were to write a book to convince people that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, what "miraculous signs" from you own life would you be sure to include?
- Read **Romans 6:5-11**. What does it mean to have life in his name and what does it look like in your everyday life?

Encounter with Jesus

Picture yourself as one of Jesus' followers. Follow the path to the tomb and meet Jesus there. Hear him speak your name. What do you hear him say to you? You may want to write down what you hear.

BELOW IS THE EXTRA SCRIPTURE FOR LESSON 20 THAT YOU CAN PRINT OUT FOR SMALL GROUP TIME

NIV

Mark 16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.

Matthew 27:59-61 Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, **60** and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. **61** Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

Matthew 27:62-66 The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. **63** "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' **64** So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." **65** "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." **66** So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Luke 8:1-3 After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, **2** and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; **3** Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Mark 15:40 Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.

Luke 7:41-43 "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. **42** Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" **43** Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

John 10:3-5 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. **5** But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Matthew 5:43-45 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' **44** But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **45** that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 6:12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matthew 6:14-15 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15** But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

1Peter 1:8-9 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, **9** for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

NLT

Mark 16:1 The next evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene and Salome and Mary the mother of James went out and purchased burial spices to put on Jesus' body.

Matthew 27:59-61 Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a long linen cloth. **60** He placed it in his own new tomb, which had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a great stone across the entrance as he left. **61** Both Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting nearby watching.

Matthew 27:62-66 The next day—on the first day of the Passover ceremonies—the leading priests and Pharisees went to see Pilate. **63** They told him, "Sir, we remember what that deceiver once said while he was still alive: 'After three days I will be raised from the dead.' **64** So we request that you seal the tomb until the third day. This will prevent his disciples from coming and stealing his body and then telling everyone he came back to life! If that happens, we'll be worse off than we were at first." **65** Pilate replied, "Take guards and secure it the best you can." **66** So they sealed the tomb and posted guards to protect it.

Luke 8:1-3 Not long afterward Jesus began a tour of the nearby cities and villages to announce the Good News concerning the Kingdom of God. He took his twelve disciples with him, **2** along with some women he had healed and from whom he had cast out evil spirits. Among them were Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons; **3** Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's business manager; Susanna; and many others who were contributing from their own resources to support Jesus and his disciples.

Mark 15:40 Some women were there, watching from a distance, including Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James the younger and of Joseph), and Salome.

Luke 7:41-43 Then Jesus told him this story: "A man loaned money to two people—five hundred pieces of silver to one and fifty pieces to the other. **42** But neither of them could

repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?" **43** Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt." "That's right," Jesus said.

John 10:3-5 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they recognize his voice. **5** They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't recognize his voice."

Isaiah 53:5 But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!

Matthew 5:43-45 "You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. **44** But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! **45** In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too.

Matthew 6:12, 14-15 and forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. **14** "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. **15** But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

1Peter 1:8-9 You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him, you trust him; and even now you are happy with a glorious, inexpressible joy. **9** Your reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.