



LESSON 20 ~ SORROW TURNS TO JOY!

John 20

DISCUSSION STARTER

- Recall a time when you acted straight from your heart, disregarding all reason. What was the result?
- When something upsets you, who is the first person you tell? Why?

INTRODUCTION

If the story told in the Gospel of John ended with **chapter 19**, it would not be exceptional; all human biographies end in death. If Jesus' story ended at his crucifixion, we would be left with a picture of Jesus as a great moral teacher who made some extraordinary claims. But, in the end, his claims would have been negated, his aspirations would have been unrealized, and his teaching would have seemed too lofty to be true. The major difference between the life and teachings of Jesus and those of any other great religious teacher lies in the fact that Jesus rose from the dead and the others did not.

Christianity is all about a relationship with the *living* God; it is about *knowing* Christ personally, not knowing *about* him. Thus the empty tomb, witnessed in **John 20**, proves that Jesus is no longer dead, but alive. This is central to our faith. Otherwise, Christianity would be a dead religion. *And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless, and you are still under condemnation for your sins (1 Corinthians 15:17)*. The empty tomb represents the fact that even death by crucifixion couldn't nail down the power of God. Jesus is *alive* and that is the *Good News!*

PREPARATION

1. Before you read **John 20**, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you into all truth (**John 16:13**). You may want to make the following prayer your own:

Spirit of the Living God, the One who comforts, strengthens and encourages me.

I admit that I cannot understand the truth found in God's Word with only my mind.

I agree that spiritual truth has to be understood with my heart as well as my head.

So I ask You to give me spiritual understanding as I do this lesson.

*I pray that You would enable me to see, hear and understand,
with my spirit, all that You want to teach me.*

I ask this in the powerful Name of Jesus (as if Jesus were asking it).

Amen

2. Read **John 20** slowly and thoughtfully in your own Bible. As you read and reread, *underline or highlight* any verses, phrases or words that are meaningful to you. Put a *question mark* beside anything you don't understand. Put a ✓ beside anything you would like more information about.

You may also want to read this chapter in another translation. The Scripture handouts for these lessons contain the *Amplified Version* of the Bible. It is important, however, that you don't try to answer the questions in the lesson from just the *Amplified Version*. The questions are phrased to be answered from the *New International Version (NIV)*, the *New Living Translation (NLT)*, or something similar. Using **only** the *Amplified Version* may be confusing. It is given only as a supplementary text.

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)?
 - ♥ 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?
2. When Peter and the other disciple entered the tomb, what specific items did they discover (20:3-7)?
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)?
 - ♥ What different conclusion might John have come to if he saw nothing in the tomb? Why?
 - ♥ 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?
 - ♥ 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?
 - ♥ 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)?

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?
 - ♥ 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)?

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.

- ♥ 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**)?

- ♥ 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?

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**?

- ♥ 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**)?

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

- ♥ 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**?

- ♥ 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**).

♥ 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?

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?

♥ 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?

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?

♥ 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? Do you think it is all right to have doubts about your faith? Can you think of any ways that doubting would be beneficial?

♥ 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?

♥ What personal message from Jesus to you do you see in **20:29**? How does this make you feel? Compare Jesus' words with **1 Peter 1:8-9**. Is this your experience? Why or why not?

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 your 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.