

JESUS' RESURRECTION

Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-18; Luke 24:1-49; John 20:1-29

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and the disciples

Key-location: Jerusalem

Key-repetitions:

- People realized that Jesus' body was not in the grave: the women (Lk 24:2-3); Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:2-3); John and Peter (Lk 24:12; Jn 20:2-8).
- Jesus appeared to: Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:11-17); the disciples gathered in Jerusalem when Thomas was absent (Jn 20:19-24); a week later with Thomas present (Jn 20: 26-29).
- Announcement that Jesus was brought back to life: an angel told the women (Lk 24:4-7); guards reported to the chief priests (Mat 28:11-15); women informed the disciples (Mat 28:8; Lk 24:8-11); other disciples informed Thomas (Jn 20:25).
- People didn't believe the testimony that Jesus was alive: the eleven disciples didn't believe the women (Lk 24:11); Thomas doubted the other disciples (Jn 20:25).

Key-attitudes:

- Jesus' followers' disillusionment after his death.
- Guards' fear when the angel removed the stone.
- Women's concern about who would remove the stone from the grave.
- Unbelief of those who heard that Jesus was alive.
- Jesus' followers' terror, and later joy, when Jesus appeared to them.

Initial-situation:

On Friday, Jesus died on the cross and was buried. On Saturday, the chief priests and Pharisees requested for Pilate to order soldiers to guard Jesus' tomb until the third day. They wanted to prevent the disciples from stealing the body and later telling the people that he had been brought back to life. Pilate gave orders for the soldiers to be posted.

Jesus' followers forgot his promise that he would return to life after death. They were terrified of the Jewish leaders and hid behind locked doors.

Initial-problem:

At sunrise on Sunday, women made their way to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus.

Final-situation:

Jesus said that those who believe in him without seeing him are blessed.

BIBLE STORY

Empty Tomb

At sunrise on Sunday morning, the women started on their way to the tomb. Suddenly, there was a violent earthquake. An angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled away the stone, and sat on it. His appearance was as bright as lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. The guards were terrified. They shook and became like dead men who couldn't move (Mat 28:1-4).

On the way to the tomb, the women asked each other, "Who will roll the large stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

Then the women saw that the large stone had already been rolled away. They entered the tomb and saw a young man (*he was an angel*) dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side. They were terrified.

The man said, "Don't be afraid. You're looking for Jesus from Nazareth, who was nailed to a cross. God brought him back to life! The place where they laid him is empty. Go, tell his disciples, especially Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee, just as he promised.'"

The terrified women fled from the tomb and reported what they had seen to the eleven disciples, but they didn't believe the women. They thought the women were speaking nonsense (Mk 16:2-8; Lk 24:9-11).

However, Peter and John ran to the tomb. John outran Peter and reached the tomb first. John bent over and saw the strips of linen lying there but didn't go into the tomb. Simon Peter arrived and went straight into the tomb. Peter saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. Finally, John went inside. John saw and believed that the tomb was empty. Peter and John still didn't understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise to life from the dead. Then the two disciples returned to their homes (Jn 20:3-10).

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene stood crying outside the tomb. She looked into the tomb and saw two angels dressed in white, seated where Jesus' body had been.

The angels asked Mary, "Woman, why are you crying?"

Mary answered, "They've removed my Lord's body. I don't know where they've put him."

Mary turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn't recognize him.

Jesus asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

Mary mistook Jesus for the gardener and said, "Sir, if you've carried his body away, tell me where you put him, and I'll go get him."

Jesus said, "Mary."

Mary turned toward him and cried out, "Teacher."

Jesus said, "Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news, "I've seen the Lord!" (Jn 20:11-18).

Guards

Some soldiers who had guarded the tomb went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. The religious leaders bribed the soldiers with a large sum of money, and told them, "Say that his disciples came during the night and stole his body while you were asleep." The soldiers took the bribe and did as they were instructed (Mat 28:11-15).

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

Ten of the disciples and others gathered together behind locked doors for fear of the Jewish leaders (Lk 24:33-35; Jn 20:19).

Suddenly, Jesus appeared and said, "Peace be with you."

All were terrified. They thought they were seeing a ghost. Jesus said, "Why are you terrified? Why do you doubt? Look at my hands and my feet. It's really me! Touch me and see; ghosts don't have flesh and bones like I have."

Jesus showed them his hands and feet. The disciples still couldn't believe what they were seeing; it seemed too good to be true. Jesus took a piece of broiled fish, and ate it while they watched (Lk 24:36-43).

Thomas, one of the Twelve, wasn't with the disciples when Jesus appeared to them. The other disciples told Thomas, "We've seen the Lord!"

Thomas replied, "Unless I see and touch the nail marks in his hands, and put my hand where the spear went into his side, I won't believe it" (Jn 20:24-25).

A week later, on the following Sunday, Jesus' disciples were again in the house. This time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; however, Jesus entered and said, "Peace be with you!" Then Jesus told Thomas, "Put your finger here; examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Stop doubting! Believe!"

Thomas said, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus told Thomas, "You believe because you saw me; a better blessing is for those who believe without seeing me" (Jn 20:26-29).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story? | 5. How did the characters face their problems? |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems? |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story? | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face? | 8. What does the story tell about God? |

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What happened when the women went to Jesus' tomb on Sunday morning?

2. Why did the disciples remain in Jerusalem when angels told them that Jesus would meet them in Galilee?
3. What did the religious leaders do when they received the guards' report that Jesus had risen?
4. How did the disciples go from disbelief that Jesus had been brought back to life to belief?
5. What did it take to convince Thomas that Jesus had been brought back to life?
6. What experiences have you had in overcoming doubt about Jesus?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Believers in Jesus should take advantage of opportunities given them to serve God instead of worrying about what they can't do.** The women couldn't testify for Jesus before the Sanhedrin; they couldn't appeal to Pilate; they couldn't resist the crowds; they couldn't overpower Roman guards. But they did what they could: they stayed at the cross when most of the disciples fled; they followed Jesus' body to its tomb; they prepared spices to anoint his dead body. They did what they could and God blessed their devotion; they were the first to witness the resurrection.
2. **People who fight against God may experience temporary victory but they will lose the battle.** Jewish religious leaders thought they defeated Jesus when he died on the cross. They took precautions against Jesus' predictions about his resurrection. They had the tomb sealed and guarded to prevent Jesus' followers from stealing the body of Jesus (Mat 27:66). Their temporary victory ended on Sunday, when an angel rolled away the stone and Jesus resurrected (Mat 28:1-4).
3. **God may adapt his plans because of people's reluctance to obey him.** Angels told the women that Jesus would meet his disciples in Galilee (Mk 16:7). However, the disciples were afraid of the religious leaders and hid behind locked doors in Jerusalem (Jn 20:19). So Jesus first met them in Jerusalem and later in Galilee (Jn 21).
4. **The good news of the resurrection requires people to make one of two choices: believe that Jesus rose from the dead, or deny it and try to explain it away.** After the resurrection, a group of women went to share the good news that Jesus was alive, while religious leaders plotted how to cover up the resurrection (Mat 28:11-15).
5. **People may need to pass through stages of belief before finally believing in Jesus.** The disciples went through four stages before they believed in the resurrection. (1) They thought the women's story was a fabrication, impossible to believe (Lk 24:11). (2) They checked out the facts and were still puzzled. Peter and John went to the tomb and still didn't understand (Jn 20:6). (3) They encountered

Jesus personally and accepted the fact of the resurrection (Mary - Jn 20:16; the disciples - Jn 20:19-24). (4) They testified to others about Jesus (Jn 20:25).

6. **A questioning doubter may be on the road to faith.** Doubt can become a stepping stone to faith. When doubt leads to questions, questions lead to answers, answers increase faith. Jesus was not hard on Thomas for his doubts. Despite his skepticism, Thomas was loyal to his fellow disciples and to Jesus himself (Jn 20:25-28).

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Drama:

Have some ladies and men dramatize what happened when the women reported to the disciples that Jesus' body was not in the tomb.