

Q that you may believe

that you may believe the forty

that you may believe the passion

that you may believe the i ams

that you may believe the teachings

that you may believe the signs

that you may believe the light

Apr 16 Mary Magdalene
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Pastor's Introduction

I took a class in college on public speaking. One of our assignments was to give a persuasive speech. In a persuasive speech, you begin with a thesis, which is something you want your audience to believe or do. Next, you support your thesis with arguments that undergird your thesis. I have no idea what the subject of my speech was, so it must not have been very impactful! The apostle John wrote his Gospel as a persuasive speech. His intent is to convince his reader to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. All the stories he includes are in support of his thesis. At the end of the Gospel, he writes, "But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31)." Beginning Sunday, September 11 we will begin a new series through the Gospel of John entitled "That You May Believe" that will conclude in May 2023.

The Gospel of John is an incredible story of the life and mission of Jesus Christ. John is written differently than the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). They are written as a synopsis, basically in chronological order, of the events of Jesus' life. John is written thematically. As we study through the Gospel of John, we will highlight these themes and study the book according to the themes. We will begin with the theme of light and darkness. Then we will identify the seven signs given by John. After that, we will study the teaching discourses of Jesus, followed by His "I AM" statements. At the end of the series, we will examine the passion week and the forty days following Jesus' resurrection. As John states, all these themes and stories were included so that you may believe. My prayer is that this series will point people to Jesus and that they would believe in Him as Savior.

Ed. DW & TG



Participant Guide for April 16, 2023

Mary Magdalene

John 20:11-18

Highlight

Action Step:

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:

This lesson transitions us into the Sixth and final theme of John's Gospel. The 1st theme was "The Light." The 2nd theme was "The Signs." The 3rd Theme was "The Teachings." The 4th theme was the Seven "I Am" statements of Jesus. The 5th theme was "The Passion." The 6th theme is "The Forty." This theme refers to the events happening during the forty days between the resurrection and the Ascension of Christ to the Father.

Our scripture today focuses on the resurrected Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene. This event also is seen in Mark 16:9-11. Reading through the entire chapter of John 20, we see that eleven people witnessed the resurrection of Jesus that had taken place (ten men and one woman). Note that this woman was Mary Magdalene.



Apply

1. What do we know as scriptural facts about Mary Magdalene? (Look at a concordance and note specific references in all four gospels.)
2. What might you have been taught or heard about Mary Magdalene that is not reflected in scripture? What cautions should we take against reading our own beliefs or pop culture into scripture? How can we best let scripture form our beliefs?
3. How would you characterize Mary Magdalene's support of Jesus' ministry?
4. Read Luke 8:2. What changes in Mary are evident, and how were they possible? How does this speak to us today as to how Jesus makes a difference in our lives?
5. Note that Mary Magdalene was the first person to encounter the risen Christ and the first person to provide witness of our risen Savior. How does this first appearance to a woman demonstrate grace and the openness of the gospel? What does this say to us about witnessing regardless of our status, past, and fears?
6. How does Mary's recognition relate to what Jesus said in John 10:4? Do you claim to know the Shepherd's voice?

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated?**

- ◆ This week reflect on how you should respond if you have encountered Jesus' resurrection in your own heart and mind. Does this stir you to spread the good news like Mary Magdalene?

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Participant Guide April 23, 2023

Upper Room

John 20:19-23

Highlight

Action Step:

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:

In our scripture today, we find the disciples, and possibly others, were gathered behind locked doors, no doubt in fear. Jesus suddenly appears to offer them comfort.



Apply

1. In what ways do churches lock themselves behind their doors? What are some of the common reasons for this behavior? When this happens, what results?
2. In verse 19, reflect on why Jesus' followers were so fearful that they locked themselves behind closed doors. What symbolic meaning do you believe John is making between Jesus and the locked door?
3. In verse 20, Jesus gave a warm welcome of "peace be with you," but before they could respond, he showed them his wounds. Why did Jesus make such a display? What does their response say to us when we truly experience our Lord?
4. In verse 21, the Father again becomes the center of Jesus' thoughts. Link this verse with Matthew 9:38 and Mark 1:17 and relate it to what Jesus is saying to us. When sent, what are some expectations?
5. In John 14:16-17; 15:26-27; 16:7-15, Jesus promises the "advocate" (Holy Spirit) is coming. How do you differentiate these verses from verse 22?
6. The context of verse 23 is challenging. On what basis could human beings forgive the sins of others? We believe that only God can forgive sins, so what is Jesus telling them?

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**

- ◆ This week examine your actions of locking yourself away in spiritual solitude. Pray that you are receptive to being sent.



Participant Guide for April 30, 2023

Thomas

John 20:24-29

Highlight

Action Step:

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Today's focus on Thomas is a lesson in faith that John records to stress his purpose in this gospel further— "so that we may believe."

NOTE: Verses 24-29 take place a week after the resurrection.



Apply

1. Have you witnessed or experienced an incident where someone was gullible or easily duped? Or have you known someone who was the complete opposite who was always skeptical and said, “show me”? Recall examples of both types of people.
2. Thomas often gets (perhaps unfair) nickname of being “Doubting Thomas.” How did he get that nickname? What are some other stories about Thomas told in the gospels that may lead to believing this nickname is a bit unfair?
3. Thomas was certainly not gullible. What proof do you see in verses 24-25? How often do you suppose Thomas heard about the resurrection from the disciples? Why didn’t he believe?
4. Thomas did not join in the upper room with the others on the first day of the resurrection. What are some of the reasons he may not have been present?
5. In verse 26, we see Thomas in the upper room a week later when Jesus appears again. How does this passage show us how important it is today to be a part of a fellowship of believers? Why was it so important for Thomas to return? Note in verse 27 what Jesus says and does not say.
6. The Christ of the cross reached into Thomas’s inner being. How does this speak to the evidence of Christ’s presence today?

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**

- ◆ This week, examine the depth of Christ's presence in your life. Pray for Christ to bring greater realism and belief into your life. Pray for a revival of spirit and commitment.



Participant Guide for May 7, 2023

Purpose

John 20:30-31

Highlight

Action Step:

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:

In our scripture today, John reiterates once again his purpose for writing this unique gospel. He chose specific works and words of Jesus' ministry that prompts us to faith. That faith gives meaning to the lives of believers.



Apply

1. Have you ever watched a movie or read a book and wondered why the director or author left in a particular scene? Good editing is more important than good writing. Why is good editing so important?
2. Make a connection between John 20:30 and 21:25. John admits that he has not told us everything about Jesus' signs. Why was good editing important to John? What point is he making for us about his selection of signs? Why does he refer to Jesus' miracles as "signs" instead of as "miracles"?
3. What accounts do you recall from John's gospel about Jesus' deeds that healed both physical and spiritual needs? If Christ's purpose was not just to perform miracles, then what was his purpose(s) in coming?
4. Notice verse 31 says that John's reason for telling these things is "so we might believe." How is our belief system tied to understanding and confessing truth? What are some distinctions between believing and just understanding?
5. The end of verse 31 stresses that we have life in Jesus' name. What does it mean to "have life"? What are some distinctions between physical and spiritual life? Note what Paul says in Ephesians 2:1-3 about us being "children of wrath." What does that mean and what is our promise in overcoming God's wrath?
6. Once we accept a newness of life, then, according to scripture, what should we do? (Refer to 1 John 1:5-7) How do we strive to walk in the light?

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**

- ◆ Take some time this week to reflect on your spiritual beliefs and assess how your beliefs lead to understanding and confession. Pray that your life will grow in faith and trust.



Participant Guide for May 14, 2023

Breakfast

John 21:1-14

Highlight

Action Step:

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:

Jesus shows himself again to his disciples. This time it is after they toiled all night fishing and caught nothing. No doubt in frustration, they return to shore, being welcomed by Jesus and a prepared breakfast. John says this was the third time Jesus appeared to them after the resurrection.



Apply

1. Is there anyone that you know who has a very dominant personality? In other words, when they enter the room or conversation, you know they're about to take over. How can this personality portrait be a positive or a negative?
2. John apparently points to Peter as the disciples' dominant personality and group leader. What evidence do you see that supports this statement? What were some reasons the disciples decided to go back to fishing? (Consider their frame of mind and despair.)
3. Try to imagine the disciples' frame of mind after toiling for nothing all night. Think of something you failed to accomplish after working so hard and achieving nothing. What were your thoughts/actions?
4. Read Ecclesiastes 2:17-22. How likely are the words of this teacher applied to the feeling of the disciples? Have you ever felt this way? If so, how were you able to overcome these feelings?
5. How did Jesus's presence affect the disciple's frame of mind and sense of well-being? How does Jesus transform your life like the account today?
6. How are we assured that God is in our midst and involved in our struggles?

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**

- ◆ Deliberately try to leave spaces in your schedule to allow for interruptions. They may bring surprises of hope and faith. Trust that Jesus knows what we need and allow him to lighten your load.

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Participant Guide for May 21, 2023

Revival

Highlight

Action Step:

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:



Apply

A supplement will be provided closer to Revival Sunday.

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**

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Participant Guide for May 28, 2023

Restoration of Peter

John 21:15-19

Highlight

Action Step:

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:

Peter's story of being forgiven, restored, and renewed is a lovely picture with which John finishes his gospel. It reminds us that we must be in a lasting fellowship with Christ.

There is a site on the north shore of Galilee that is referred to as the "Primacy of Peter." It is the location of our discussion today. The picture on the left is the shrine built over the rock where Jesus was cooking fish over a charcoal fire as the disciples were pulling in from a night of fishing with no results. Jesus told them to throw it over the other side of the boat. The picture on the right is a bronze cast depicting Christ restoring Peter to his place of spiritual leadership. This was necessary due to Peter's earlier denial.





Apply

1. Recall how Peter had failed Jesus (Matthew 26:69-74, Mark 13:66-71; Luke 22:56-60). Imagine how he must have felt after so many encounters with Jesus, after pledging his allegiance (Luke 22:33), after pledging his life (John 13:37), and after he claimed he would never deny Jesus (Matthew 26:33-35).
2. Peter assumed he had the courage of a lion but discovered he was as cowardly as a sheep. How did this realization enable him for future service? How does being humble help us in today's ministry?
3. Peter failed Jesus, but he also found Jesus's forgiveness. Jesus asked Peter the same thing three times. Why was this significant? How many times did Peter deny Jesus? What evidence do we see in today's scripture that Jesus has clearly forgiven Peter? Consider the depth of Peter's sins and the height of Jesus's forgiveness and apply that to your life.
4. Jesus not only forgave Peter's sins; he also restored him to service and renewed him. What evidence of this do we see in verses 15-17?
5. How do we best view and apply this last picture that John paints for us concerning our sins and downfalls? Consider the element of hope that we can claim.
6. Read vs. 18-19. What was Jesus painting a picture of?
7. This is the same exact life of discipleship that he calls us to today. "Follow Me". We must understand that while the path might be a bit different for each of us, it will not be void of suffering. It cannot be, otherwise we cannot participate in his blessing if we do not participate in his suffering. How do you feel about this reality of our "Follow Me" command?

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**

- ◆ Today's focus reminds us that we need to be in a lasting fellowship with Christ. What will you do to restore and enhance your fellowship with God?

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