

The Easter Experience

Episode Six: I Have a Hope that Never Dies

Opening Thoughts

1. What has been the most joyous experience of your life? What made it so wonderful?
2. What do you look forward to most in life? Why?

Luke 8:1-3

¹After 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, ²and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; ³Joanna 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.

3. Imagine if Jesus worked a miracle in your life so profound that you were changed forever, how would your attitude be different? How might you respond to Jesus for the rest of your life after a change like that?

Matthew 28:1-10

¹After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

²There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

⁸So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

4. Have you ever lost someone you loved dearly? What encouraged you during those dark times? Can you imagine what Mary was feeling?
5. Have you ever had seasons of doubt concerning the resurrection? What caused you to return to your faith?

6. Do you think it was difficult for Mary to believe that Jesus was alive? Why or why not?
7. Should Mary and the other disciples have expected Jesus to return after dying? Why or why not? What would it take for you to believe something like that?

John 20:1-18

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ²So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. ⁸Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

¹⁰Then the disciples went back to their homes, ¹¹but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' "

¹⁸Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

8. When the empty tomb was confirmed, Jesus' disciples went back home but Mary remained at the tomb. Why do you think she stayed there? What might you have done in her situation?
9. Why was Mary unable to recognize Jesus at first?
10. Why are we oftentimes unable to recognize the person and work of Jesus in our own lives? What gets in the way?
11. How do you celebrate what Jesus has done in your life? How do you celebrate the greatest experiences in your life?

12. Based on the *Easter Experience*, what hope do you have for your family? Co-workers?
Friends?

Digging Deeper

Often the argument is given that there is no way to be sure of Jesus' resurrection because it is based only on the testimony of a few of his closest followers. Consider the biblical evidence and the multitude of resurrection appearances as you conclude your study of the *Easter Experience*.

- Mark 16:9-11 and John 20:11-18- Jesus appeared to _____ after his resurrection.
- Matthew 28:9-10- Jesus appeared to the _____.
- Mark 16:12-13 and Luke 24:13-35- Jesus appeared to _____
- Luke 24:35- Jesus appeared to _____.
- Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; and John 20:19-25- Jesus appeared to his _____ without _____.
- John 20:26-31- Jesus appeared to his _____ with _____.
- John 21:1-25- Jesus appeared to seven of his _____ by the Sea of Galilee.
- Matt 28:16-20- Jesus appeared to his _____ on a mountain.
- 1 Corinthians 15:6- Jesus appeared to over _____ disciples.
- 1 Corinthians 15:7- Jesus appeared to his brother _____.
- Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:44-53; Acts 1:9-11- Jesus appeared to his _____ at his ascension.

Why is it significant for our hope in the resurrection that Jesus appeared to so many? If these accounts were not true what might have happened during the years soon after Jesus' death when the gospels were being written?

Digging Deeper Answers

1. "Mary Magdalene"
2. "Other women from Galilee"
3. "Two disciples on the road to Emmaus"
4. "Peter"
5. "Disciples" and "Thomas"
6. "Disciples" and "Thomas"
7. "Disciples"
8. "Disciples"
9. "500"
10. "James"
11. "Disciples"