



April 2018 Discussion  
Resurrection

**What you need:**

Bible

Laptop if you are showing the videos

## Noticing Others (25 minutes)

Last month we talked about surrendering, or yielding, to God. Did you try any new spiritual practices during Lent? Did you have any experiences where you felt yourself yielding to God in prayer, action or decision making?

As the days are getting a little longer, are you noticing any signs of new life around you that bring you joy?

*Opening Prayer*

**Holy, holy, holy Lord- we praise you for your love: bringing order out of chaos, breathing life into dust, leading captives to freedom, calling wandering children home, giving bread to the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, raising the dead to life. We thank you for Jesus: Word made flesh, light of the world, living water, shepherd and gate, way and truth, bread of heaven, cup of salvation, resurrection and life. Amen.**

(reprinted from the forthcoming "Book of Common Worship")

## Noticing God (40 minutes)

*This month we are talking about **Resurrection** as our theme on Sunday mornings. In Life Groups, we are exploring what it means that God raised Jesus from the dead and promises resurrection power to those who belong to God. During the seven Sundays of Easter leading to Pentecost (May 20 this year), we want to be focused on God's power to bring new life in Christ.*

**Option 1, Discussion Jump in:**

- Growing up, did you celebrate Easter? If so, what was your favorite tradition?

**Option 2, Digital Jump in:**

This is a recording of the song "I Can Only Imagine" as a tribute to Billy Graham (who recently died), with photos and quotations. As you watch and listen, what feelings arise about the promise and power of our resurrection in Christ? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rlu-a1lgeTo>

"But the proclamation of Easter day is that all is well. And as a Christian, I say this not with the easy optimism of one who has never known a time when all was not well but as one who has faced the Cross in all its obscurity as well as in all its glory, who has known one way or another what it is like to live separated from God. In the end, his will, not ours, is done. Love is the victor. Death is not the end. The end is life. His life and our lives through him, in him. Existence has greater depths. Of beauty, mystery, and benediction that the wildest visionary has ever dared to dream. Christ our Lord has risen." - Frederick Buechner, *Listening to Your Life*

**Notice God's Word:** Mark 16:1-8 Common English Bible (CEB)

**When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint Jesus' dead body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they came to the tomb. They were saying to each other, "Who's going to roll the stone away from the entrance for us?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. (And it was a very large stone!) Going into the tomb, they saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right side; and they were startled. But he said to them, "Don't be alarmed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.[a] He has been raised. He isn't here. Look, here's the place where they laid him. Go, tell his disciples, especially Peter, that he is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you." Overcome with terror and dread, they fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.[b]**

Footnotes:

[a]Mark 16:6 Or the Crucified One

[b]Mark 16:8 In most critical editions of the Gk New Testament, the Gospel of Mark ends at 16:8.

In the group discuss:

- What do you notice in this passage that encourages you? What surprises you?
- The oldest copies of Mark's Gospel end with verse 8 (verses 9-20 are additions in later copies). Why would Mark end his gospel so abruptly with verse 8?
- Why did the women visit the tomb? What does their action indicate?
- Why does the angel single out Peter as the one who is especially to be told about Jesus' resurrection?
- The story implies that Jesus had better things to do than to hang around in an empty tomb until someone came. What do you think He went to do?
- Why is the resurrection the central pillar of Christian faith?

**Now what?**

- What does it mean for us to be "raised with Christ" (Ephesians 2:6)? How does the resurrection make a difference in our lives now?
- We often feel powerless to change the mess we're in, powerless to break a bad habit, or save an important relationship. How might the resurrection power of Jesus help? See Ephesians 1:19-20.

"It was no accident, no coincidence, that the seasons came round and round year after year. It was the Lord speaking to us all and showing us over and over again the birth, life, death, and resurrection of his only begotten Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, our Lord. It was like a best-loved story being told day after day with each sunrise and sunset, year after year with the seasons, down through the ages since time began."  
— **Francine Rivers, The Last Sin Eater**

## Noticing God's Activity in our Life (20 minutes)

### Noticing God's Activity in our Life (Closing Prayer)

Noting how much time is left, please go around the circle and give people the opportunity to share prayer requests. Then have a time of prayer. Begin that prayer with silence, then pray for requests that have been shared. Thank the Lord for the message of Easter. Pray that the reality of Jesus' resurrection will ground small group members in the forgiveness of their sins, the availability of power for present problems, and assurance for their future.

*Closing prayer: **Mighty God, in whom we know the power of redemption, you stand among us in the shadows of our time. As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life, uphold us with knowledge of the final morning when in the glorious presence of your risen Son, we will share in his resurrection, redeemed and restored to the fullness of life and forever freed to be your people. Amen.***

Before you leave: End with clarifying date and time details for the next meeting. (who is hosting, who is leading, who is providing a snack?) Thank everyone for being there. See you next month!

## Optional Extras for Later...

### For more reading/pondering on the resurrection:

- Read 1 Corinthians 15 (especially verses 1-28) for Paul's full theological commentary on the resurrection.
- Read an excerpt from *The Scots' Confession* (written when The Scottish Parliament, having declared Scotland a Protestant nation, asked the clergy to frame a confession of faith. Six ministers, including John Knox, completed their work in four days. In 1560, the document was ratified by Parliament as "doctrine grounded upon the infallible Word of God.") Here's what they said about **The Resurrection**

**3.10** We undoubtedly believe, since it was impossible that the sorrows of death should retain in the Author of life, that our Lord Jesus crucified, dead, and buried, who descended into hell, did rise again for our justification, and the destruction of him who was the author of death, and brought life again to us who were subject to death and its bondage. We know that his resurrection was confirmed by the testimony of his enemies, and by the resurrection of the dead, whose sepulchers did open, and they did rise and appear to many within the city of Jerusalem. It was also confirmed by the testimony of his angels, and by the senses and judgment of his apostles and of others, who had conversation, and did eat and drink with him after his resurrection.

### A practice: Bless someone else with a spring surprise.

Paul once told the Ephesian elders, "In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35). Paul was describing an "outward-focused" lifestyle dedicated to evangelism and discipleship.

What is one simple way you can enjoy the blessing of giving rather than receiving? Instead of buying something for yourself, why not buy it for a friend who's been having a hard time lately? Or if you're a mom of small children, plan a spring surprise for your kids—decorating cookies, making a craft, or a picnic at the park. Cultivating an outward-focused heart doesn't have to be complicated. Start small this spring.

**Activities for the family or a small group about new life:**

Planting seeds or helping in a community garden, taking a walk in the woods and noticing what is coming up, watching the *Chronicles of Narnia* or reading from *the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.



*"There, shining in the sunrise, larger than they had seen him before, shaking his mane (for it had apparently grown again) stood Aslan himself."*

*The Resurrection Scene from the Chronicles of Narnia (2-minute clip):*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0u90NYqTck>

*The following is an excerpt from chapter 15 of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis. "They walked to the eastern edge of the hill and looked down. The one big star had almost disappeared. The country looked dark gray, but beyond, at the very end of the world, the sea showed pale. The sky began to turn red....The rising of the sun had made everything look so different - all colors and shadows were changed - that for a moment they didn't see the important thing. Then they did. The Stone Table was broken into two pieces by a great crack that ran down it from end to end; and there was no Aslan...."*

*"Oh, oh, oh!" cried the two girls, rushing back to the Table. "Oh it's too bad," sobbed Lucy; "they might have left his body alone." "Who's done it?" cried Susan. "What does it mean? It is more magic?" "Yes!" said a great voice behind their backs. "It is more magic." They looked round. There, shining in the sunrise, larger than they had seen him before, shaking his mane (for it had apparently grown again) stood Aslan himself...."*

*"But what does it all mean?" asked Susan when they were somewhat calmer. "It means," said Aslan, "that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little farther back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backward."*

*..."We have a long journey to go. You must ride on me." And he crouched down and the children climbed onto his warm golden back... And with a great heave he rose underneath them and then shot off, faster than any horse could go, downhill and into the thick of the forest. That ride was perhaps the most wonderful thing that happened to them in Narnia.*

*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis was first published in 1950 by Geoffrey Bles. It was the first book written in the Narnia series, which contains seven books in total. Featured picture is from the cover of the 2007 edition by Harper Collins.*