

GROWTHguide

Starting April 20, 2014

“Is the Resurrection Fact or Fiction?”



“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.” - 1 Corinthians 15:1-5

Day 1: Read John 20:1-9

- Imagine how Mary felt when she approached in the darkness and saw the stone had been removed; it would have been a fearful sight! Mary thought someone had taken Jesus; she did not yet understand that Jesus had risen. Can you imagine the panic the Disciples felt when Mary told them what she had seen?

William R. Cannon writes, *“On receiving the news from Mary, the two ran to the sepulcher, and John, being younger, outran Peter and got there first. He waited for Peter before going in. When they entered, all they found were the grave clothes. These convinced them that something more than the removal of a body had taken place. If the body had been removed, it would have stayed wrapped in its burial clothes.”* Think of how amazing it would have been to see Jesus’ clothes lying there, as if he had simply gotten up and walked away—because that’s exactly what he did!

Day 2: Read John 20:10-18

William R. Cannon writes, *“He told Mary to go tell his ‘brethren,’ meaning the disciples, that he was on his way to his Father and their Father. . . Yes, and the first message the risen Lord gave to anyone to deliver in his name he entrusted to a woman. Mary Magdalene is the first person after the resurrection to announce the Christian gospel to the world.”* Jesus always treated women as people of worth. What an honor it was for Mary to be the first to see the risen Lord! Jesus also honored Mary’s obedient, childlike faith by entrusting her with the first message of his resurrection. Think of the Christian women in your life and how their faith has impacted you for the better.

Day 3: Read John 20:19-23

- Even though the Disciples had locked the door, Jesus was able to come and stand among them. Can you imagine the sheer amazement they would have felt to see Jesus miraculously appear?
- There would have been much excitement and tears flowing—after all, scripture tells us that the Disciples were “overjoyed” to see the Lord! Jesus sends the Disciples forth, just as the Father had sent him to them, and blesses them with the Holy Spirit. Think of when you accepted the Lord as your Savior and how the Holy Spirit came to live inside you. How has the Holy Spirit transformed your life?

Day 4: Read John 20:24-31

- Jesus did not reject Thomas' doubts because they were honest; Thomas wanted to know the truth. Jesus answered Thomas' doubts completely when Jesus showed him his hands and side.
- What did Thomas do when presented with the truth of Jesus' resurrection? Did he continue doubting or did he respond to the truth?
- One of the reasons we can believe the truth about Jesus' resurrection is because so many people saw him; Thomas even felt Jesus' wounds. Reflect on Jesus' words, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Day 5: Read Matthew 28:11-15

Robert E. Luccock writes, *"What difference does it make what the chief priests said or did? In the late years of the first century it made all the difference in the world. If the chief priests could spread the rumor and make it stick that the disciples stole the body and then broadcast the unbelievable tale that Jesus rose from the dead, they could thoroughly discredit the report of a resurrection. By knocking out the tale of Jesus being raised from the dead, the whole Christian gospel could be unmasked as fraud. In the atmosphere of enmity between Christian converts and the Jerusalem authorities in Matthew's time, it was crucial that Christians be told how the chief priests and sentries at the tomb conspired to try and disparage the reports of a resurrection."* Notice that the religious leaders did not visit the empty tomb to see it for themselves, for if they had, they would have come face-to-face with the truth. We have two choices—either believe that Jesus rose from the dead or close ourselves to the truth by denying it, and trying to explain it away.

Day 6: Read Matthew 28:16-20

- Jesus' promise that he will be with us "always, to the very end of the age," reminds us that he goes with us when we are called to witness. Just as Jesus commanded the Disciples to "go and make disciples all nations," we are also commanded to share the Good News of Jesus.
- We are not alone when we witness, Jesus continues to be with us through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Think of times when the Holy Spirit has guided you and given you the words to speak, in order to witness to an unbeliever.

Day 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.