

GROWTHguide

FOR THE WEEK OF MARCH 27, 2016
"FOREVER CHANGED"



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Luke 24:1-8 , ACTS 1:3, 1 Corinthians 15:3-6, John 20:19-20, John 20:30-31, Matthew 18:20

REFLECTION AND STUDY

DAY 1

This Sunday Pastor Bob talked about the debate over Jesus' resurrection that has been ongoing for two thousand years. He asked the question, "What do you believe?" Ask yourself this question again and give yourself time to really examine your belief and think about your answer.

- Do you believe Jesus truly rose from the dead?
- If a friend or a co-worker asked you to explain why you believe what you do, what would you say?

Pray and thank God for the miracle of Easter and promise of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins.

DAY 2

After his resurrection, Jesus showed himself to over 500 eyewitnesses on 12 different occasions. Why do you think Jesus returned to show himself to so many? If Jesus' body had simply disappeared from the tomb, do you think that so many would have believed in his resurrection? If the disciples hadn't seen Jesus with their own eyes, do you think they would have had the courage to spread his teachings and build his church, even when it would cost them their lives? After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples no longer feared death because they had seen Jesus conquer death. They knew the truth of God's promise of eternal life.

- Do you ever feel like your faith needs "proof?"
- What are the things that show you God is real?

Pray and thank God for all the ways He shares His presence and power with us.

DAY 3

Before Jesus' death the disciples often seemed to miss the point of what Jesus was trying to teach them. When Jesus died, they scattered, faith broken. Like Peter, they tried to hide their association with Jesus, and denied him. But when the resurrected Jesus came into their presence, they were forever changed. How were these fallible people able to spread Christianity to so many? How were these men who had been so afraid able to bravely and boldly speak the truth even in the face of death and persecution. It was not through their own strength. On their own they were weak and afraid. It was only through their revitalized faith in Jesus and through the power of God and the Holy Spirit that they were able to accomplish such great things.

- Why did Jesus return to heaven instead of staying to build the church himself?
- When things are difficult or seem hopeless in your own life, how does God give you courage?

Pray and give up control to God, acknowledging that it is through Him, not through our own strength, that we accomplish anything.

DAY 4

Have you ever seen something amazing, but when you told other people about it, they doubted you or thought you were exaggerating? Maybe you started to second guess yourself, the memory warping as you asked yourself whether you were wrong. Those who saw Jesus resurrected faced doubters everyday, people who accused them of lying about what they saw with their own eyes, or thought they were delusional. If they had agreed to say that they'd lied or that Jesus was not alive, their own lives might have been spared. Why do you think they were able to proclaim their faith in the face of doubt, opposition, and even death?

- Do other people's doubts or questions ever make you doubt your own faith and experience of God?
- How do you respond when someone questions your faith?

Pray and ask God to give you the strength and courage to proclaim your faith even in the face of doubts.

DAY 5

In Matthew 28:20, Jesus promised, *"I am with you always, even to the very end of the age."* Because Jesus is alive, we have the Son of God as our partner in life every step of the way. If Jesus were dead, we would still have His written instructions to guide us, but He is more than words on a page. He is alive to teach us, guide us, listen to us, and love us.

- Do you feel the closeness and presence of Jesus in your life?
- How is Jesus alive in your life?
- How would your life be different without Him? How would your life be different if you didn't believe?

Pray and ask Jesus to draw close to you, thank Him for how He has changed you.

DAY 6

Think about the journey of Holy Week, from the entrance to Jerusalem, to the Last Supper, to the betrayal and the cross. Take some time to think about Christ's sacrifice. He died for all of us, which means he died for you specifically. Think about the gift you have been given through his sacrifice. Continue the journey past the cross all the way through to the empty tomb, to Christ triumphant. Imagine being one of the disciples after the death of Jesus, lost and afraid, all hope gone, only to see Jesus appear before you, alive! How would it feel to see death overturned with your own eyes?

- What does Christ's resurrection mean to you personally?
- How have you been "forever changed" by the truth of his resurrection?

Pray and thank God for the gift of His son and the sacrifices made for you.

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.