

**April 20, 2025**  
**Discussion Guide: Easter Sunday**

SUMMARY: In the powerful story of Jesus' first post-resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene, we reflect on how exciting news—especially personal news—is often met with the phrase, *"Tell me about it!"* That same sense of urgency and joy marks the Easter story. Despite her heartbreak and confusion, Mary showed up at the tomb and became the first witness of the resurrected Christ. Jesus didn't appear to a disciple or a crowd first—He appeared to a woman in grief, emphasizing the personal nature of His love and the detail-rich story she would tell. Mary initially didn't recognize Jesus; she was too overcome with sorrow to perceive who was standing right in front of her. But the moment He spoke her name, everything changed. Her grief turned to joy, her confusion to clarity. We can often miss Jesus' presence in our pain, assuming He's far when He's actually near. Like Mary, we may be seeking answers or healing, but what we truly need is a personal encounter with Jesus—one that speaks directly to our hearts, reminds us we're known by name, and calls us into faith. After recognizing Jesus, Mary obeyed His instruction to go and tell the others. This mirrors our calling today, to share the life-changing news that Jesus is alive, that peace is found in His presence, and that anyone who seeks Him with their whole heart will find Him. We don't need to have everything figured out to start a relationship with Jesus, we simply need to trust Him. Easter is personal, and the invitation is open: *Tell me about it!* Jesus lives, and His presence is available today.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Show Up Anyway:** Mary didn't have everything figured out—she was grieving and confused—but she still came to the tomb. God honors our presence, even when we feel broken or unsure. Sometimes, showing up is the first step toward encountering Jesus.
- **Pain Clouds Vision:** Mary couldn't recognize Jesus at first because she was overwhelmed by sorrow. Our circumstances can distort our ability to see God's presence. Jesus is often closer than we think—even in our darkest moments.
- **A Personal Encounter:** Mary believed when Jesus called her by name. The turning point wasn't the empty tomb but the personal connection. Jesus meets us individually, speaks to us directly, and invites us into relationship.
- **Seek the Right One:** Jesus asked Mary, *"Who are you seeking?"* It's a question we all must answer. We may search for meaning, comfort, or peace, but all of that is ultimately found in Christ alone.
- **Go and Tell:** Mary was not only changed by her encounter—she was commissioned. The resurrection isn't just something to experience; it's something to share. We're all invited to go and tell the world: *He is alive!*

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURAL TEXT: John 20:11-18; Jeremiah 29:13

OBSERVATION QUESTIONS:

1. What emotions was Mary experiencing when she arrived at the tomb, and how did those emotions affect her ability to recognize Jesus?
2. How did the presence of the angels and the neatly placed burial linens contribute to the story? What did they signify to the disciples and to Mary?
3. What changed in Mary's response when Jesus called her by name? What does this moment reveal about her relationship with Jesus?
4. What instruction did Jesus give Mary after their encounter, and what was her immediate response?

INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think Jesus chose to appear first to Mary Magdalene instead of one of the disciples?
2. What does Mary's initial inability to recognize Jesus teach us about how pain and grief can impact our spiritual perception? How can this help us empathize with others in seasons of loss or confusion?
3. Why do you think Jesus asked Mary, "Who is it that you're seeking?" even though He knew the answer? What is the significance of being confronted with that question in our own faith journey?
4. What is the deeper meaning behind Jesus telling Mary not to cling to Him?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. When have you experienced exciting news that you couldn't wait to share?
2. Are there circumstances in your life right now that may be clouding your ability to recognize Jesus's presence?
3. How have you personally encountered Jesus in a way that deepened your faith?
4. What would it look like for you to "go and tell" others about what Jesus has done in your life?
5. How do you typically respond when God asks you to take a step of obedience, like He did with Mary?
6. What's one small step of obedience you could take this week?
7. Do you believe that Jesus knows you by name and wants a personal relationship with you?

## 5-DAY DEVOTIONAL:

**Day 1 – “Exciting News Worth Sharing”:** The resurrection of Jesus is the most exciting news ever told—and it's personal. Just like we can't wait to share good news in everyday life, the joy of Easter should stir in us a desire to tell others about our risen Savior.

"But Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them what he had said to her." — John 20:18 (CSB)

What makes the resurrection personal and exciting news for you to share?

**Day 2 – “Showing Up in the Pain”:** Mary showed up to the tomb in sorrow, not expecting resurrection. But in her brokenness, Jesus met her. Sometimes, faith simply looks like showing up—even when you don't have it all figured out.

"You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart." — Jeremiah 29:13 (CSB)

Where in your life do you need to “just show up” and trust Jesus to meet you?

**Day 3 – “Jesus Knows Your Name”:** Mary didn't recognize Jesus until He called her by name. That personal moment shifted her entire perspective. Jesus sees us, knows us deeply, and wants to encounter us personally.

"Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' Turning around, she said to him in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!'—which means 'Teacher.'" — John 20:16 (CSB)

How does it impact you to know that Jesus knows your name and speaks to your heart?

**Day 4 – “Peace in His Presence”:** Jesus wasn't absent from Mary's situation—her grief just kept her from recognizing Him. Like Mary, we often overlook God's presence in our pain, even though He's right there offering peace.

"He said to her, 'Woman, why are you crying? Who is it that you're seeking?'" — John 20:15a (CSB)

What's one area of your life where you need to stop and recognize Jesus is already present?

**Day 5 – “Go and Tell”:** Jesus gave Mary a mission: go and tell. Her pain turned to praise, and her personal encounter became a public testimony. We're invited to do the same—share how Jesus is alive in our lives.

"But go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." — John 20:17b (CSB)

Who in your life needs to hear what Jesus has done for you?