



SERMON STUDY

GUIDE

Small Group Guide: John 20.1-18

Open with Prayer:

Sermon Summary:

Easter does not begin in celebration. It begins in darkness. Mary arrives at the tomb early, grieving, and completely without hope, and her condition is a picture of what all of humanity has carried since sin first separated us from God in the garden (Isaiah 59.2). But God has never allowed darkness to have the final word, and the quiet, folded grave clothes inside that tomb were already a whisper that something had happened which darkness could not explain. When Jesus speaks Mary's name, everything changes, and the one who came to find the lost proves once again that grief and darkness may blind us to His presence, but they never blind Him to ours. Because the tomb is empty, the King is alive, and He is still calling people by name out of the dark.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read John 20.1-18 together as a group. What details stand out to you that you may have missed before?
2. The sermon described the darkness in John 20.1 not just as a time of day but as a human condition. How does Isaiah 59.2 and Ephesians 4.18 help you understand what that darkness actually looks like in a person's life?
3. The grave clothes were described as a clue that God left in the dark. Have you ever looked back on a hard season and recognized a clue God had quietly placed inside it? What was it?
4. Peter and John saw the evidence, believed, and went home. Mary stayed even without answers. What do you think made the difference? What does that tell us about grief, love, and persistence in faith?
5. Jesus did not appear first to the powerful or the put-together. He appeared first to a weeping woman in a garden. What does that say to you personally about who Jesus comes to and how He comes?
6. Mary did not recognize Jesus until He said her name. Has there been a moment in your life when you felt like God broke through your confusion or grief in a very personal and specific way?
7. Mary's response to seeing the risen Jesus was to go and tell (John 20.17-18). Who in your life needs to hear "I have seen the Lord at work" from you right now?

Key Takeaways:

- Darkness is not just a time of day. Sin produces real separation, real alienation, and real hostility toward God. Colossians 1.21
- God plants seeds of hope inside the darkest moments. He has never left His people without a witness, even when everything looks hopeless.
- Grief may blind you to God's presence, but it does not blind God to you. He knows right where you are, and He will call you by name.
- The tomb being empty means the King is alive. He is not a memory or a moral lesson. He is reigning, restoring, and still in the business of finding those wandering in the dark.

This Week:

- This week, **think of one person** in your life who is standing outside an empty tomb right now, someone carrying grief, loss, or a hope that feels dead.
- **Reach out to them** in a personal and specific way, whether that is a phone call, a handwritten note, or showing up in person. Don't just send a verse. Tell them something you have personally seen God do. Be their Mary. Go and tell.