

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN
Lesson 19 – Study Questions
John 20:1-31

DAY ONE

1. What thoughts from last week's lesson (Lesson 18, Chapter 19), Spiritual Reflection or commentary were meaningful to you?

Read John 20:1-9

NOTE: As our lesson ended last week, it was Friday evening and Jesus' body was prepared for burial and placed in the tomb outside the city. Because travel was forbidden on the Jewish Sabbath, Jesus' followers could not visit His tomb until Sunday.

2a. In Matthew 27:62-66 the chief priests and Pharisees asked Pilate to secure the tomb of Jesus so His followers could not steal the body. According to these verses, what was done and why?

b. Mary of Magdala arrived at Jesus' tomb on the first day of the week (after the Sabbath was over, early Sunday morning). She saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. It was still dark. Why might John have noted the darkness (verse 1)?

3a. Mary Magdalene ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one who Jesus loved. What did she tell them according to verse 2?

b. If you were Mary Magdalene, why might you have come to the tomb that Sunday morning and when you saw the stone removed, what might you have thought had happened?

4a. The two men ran toward the tomb. Arriving first, the “other disciple” (John) bent down to look in and saw the burial clothes lying there but did not go in (verse 5). Why do you think he hesitated to enter?

b. When Peter arrived he went into the tomb and saw the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. Why might it have been important to note that the head cloth was separated from the wrappings?

5a. Then the other disciple, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, went into the tomb and he saw and believed (verse 8). Explain what you think he believed upon seeing the empty tomb.

b. Record what the disciples did not yet understand (verse 9).

6. CONNECTION: Imagine the shock when Mary of Magdala, and then Peter and John, visited the tomb and found it empty. The disciples must have been in a state of shock, horror and grief from the crucifixion and death of Jesus. On that early Sunday morning they did not realize that the empty tomb heralded the salvation of the world. Grief and shock affect us in different ways. Sometimes it can be difficult to see the Lord’s goodness in times of great crisis. Can you share an experience when, after being blinded by fear or sorrow, you suddenly saw how loved you are by God?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-10 and write a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

DAY TWO

Read John 20:10-18

7a. Following their visit to Jesus’ tomb, Peter and John returned home, but Mary Magdalene stayed weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over into the tomb (verses 10-11). Describe what she saw (verse 12).

b. The angels asked Mary, “Woman, why are you weeping?” How did she answer them (verse 13)?

8a. When Mary turned around she saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Him (verse 14). What did He ask her?

b. Mary thought the gardener was speaking to her. How did she respond in verse 15?

9. It was not until Jesus called Mary by name that she recognized Him. How did she address Him in Hebrew and what does that word mean (verse 16)?

10a. In the beginning of verse 17, Jesus told Mary to stop holding on to Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father. What do you think Jesus wanted Mary to understand?

b. What did Jesus tell Mary Magdalene to do and say according to the last part of verse 17?

11. To whom did Mary then go, and what did she tell them according to verse 18?

THINK: Mary Magdalene has been called “the apostle to the apostles” because in this chapter the risen Jesus first appeared to her and sent her to announce His message to the others. How can Mary Magdalene be a model for us in carrying the good news to others?

12. CONNECTION: Jesus asked Mary, “Whom are you looking for?” We, too, must ask ourselves: “Who or what are we looking for? What gives true meaning to my life?” To answer this question we need to understand our personal relationship with Jesus. We are His beloved sisters. We are His beloved brothers. We are servants of the mighty One, warriors for the Lord of Hosts, students of the Spirit of Truth. How do you see yourself in relationship to Jesus? How would you answer His question, “Whom are you looking for?”

Reread John 15:14-16 and record a phrase that is most meaningful to you.

DAY THREE
Read John 20:19-21

13a. As today's passage opens, the disciples were gathered in a locked room on the evening of the first day of the week. For what reason were the doors locked, and why do you think the disciples were afraid (verse 19)?

b. According to verse 19, Jesus came and stood in their midst. What did He say to them?

14. Amazingly, Jesus appeared to them in spite of locked doors. Do you think John included this detail for a reason, and if so, what could it have been?

15a. What did Jesus do according to the first part of verse 20?

b. How did the disciples react according to the second part of verse 20?

16. According to the beginning of verse 21, for the second time Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you," almost as if He were saying, "Be calm, be calm, it is okay." Why do you think it was important that He repeated these words and showed them the wounds in His hands and His side?

17. Jesus also told them, "as the Father has sent me, so I send you" (end of verse 21). What could be the meaning of this directive?

18. CONNECTION: Imagine how the disciples must have felt! They were vulnerable and their futures uncertain now that their leader was dead and His body missing. Suddenly, Jesus appears and greets them with the words, "Peace be with you." Are you a "door-locker" in times of fear and uncertainty or does your faith calm your fears and lead you to realize that only God's love, not locks, can protect you? Reflect on how you handle fear in relation to your faith and record some thoughts to share with your group.

Read and record Joshua 1:9. Let thoughts of God's protection lead you into prayer.

DAY FOUR

Read John 20:22-23

19. At the end of yesterday's passage Jesus offered peace to His disciples and told them He was sending them out as the Father had sent Him. This "sending" is so important that it also occurs in a similar manner to the eleven in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Read these directives and record one:

Matthew 28:19

Mark 16:15

Luke 24:47

20a. Jesus breathed on the disciples. What did He then say to them (verse 22)?

b. Similarly, in Genesis 2:7 God breathed on Adam. What parallel might you draw between verse 22 and Genesis?

21. The breath of Christ is an external sign of the Holy Spirit. Read the following verses and note the sign of the Spirit in each:

John 1:32

Acts 2:3-4

22. Having imparted the Holy Spirit to the apostles, what special authority did Jesus give them (verse 23)?

NOTE: The Catechism of the Catholic Church states (CCC1441), "Only God forgives sins. Since He is the Son of God, Jesus says of Himself, 'The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins' and exercises this divine power. Further, by virtue of His divine authority He gives this power to men to exercise in His name."

23. The sacrament of reconciliation is based on forgiveness. God welcomes back those who are truly sorry. Record the Act of Contrition (or write a similar one that is meaningful to you).

24. CONNECTION: Forgiveness is a powerful thing. Granting it can mend a broken relationship in an instant. Withholding forgiveness can cause irreparable damage. Jesus withheld nothing on the cross to achieve our forgiveness. God wants us to model Jesus' example and be agents of His love and forgiveness regardless of the cost to ourselves. Think of a time when you either gave or received forgiveness and experienced God's grace and love in that act and share some thoughts with your small group.

Read and record Matthew 6:14. Begin today's prayer thanking God for His great mercy and asking Him to always provide you with the grace you need to give and accept forgiveness.

DAY FIVE

Read John 20:24-28

25. What do we learn about the apostle Thomas in verse 24?

26a. When the others told this disciple they had seen the Lord, he did not initially believe them. Complete what Thomas said would be necessary to convince him in verse 25.

Unless I see the mark of

and put my finger

and put my hand _____, I will not believe.

b. Why do you think doing these things would cause him to believe?

27. A week later the disciples, including Thomas, were again gathered in the house and once again Jesus appeared to them. Compare verse 26 to verse 19. What was the same and what was different?

28a. Jesus turned His attention to Thomas. From the first part of verse 27, He told Thomas to do several things. What were they and why do you think He was so specific?

b. From the end of verse 27, record Jesus' command to Thomas. (Good memory verse)

29. Though we aren't told whether Thomas actually did what Jesus told him to do, we do know this encounter eliminated his doubt. What was Thomas' response in verse 28?

THINK: Reflect for a moment on Thomas' words. Think of a time when these words became real for you.

30. CONNECTION: Thomas was skeptical, refusing to accept the testimony of the other disciples about Jesus. In spite of his doubts, he stayed and continued to pray with the others. Jesus was not angry with Thomas for questioning, but instead personally sought him out in order to solidify his faith. Many of us have experienced times of weak faith and unbelief, and like Thomas, tend to doubt and question before we truly believe. Fortunately, as long as we continue to look for answers, God promises to reveal the truth to us. Has doubt ever led you to search for truth? How did you go about your search and what was the result?

Read and record Jeremiah 29:13. Acknowledging that your faith is a gift from God and that questioning is often a necessary step to belief, begin your prayer today with the words, "I do believe; help my unbelief." (Mark 9:24)

DAY SIX

Read John 20:29-31

31. After seeing the resurrected Jesus for himself, Thomas professed his belief. What question does Jesus then ask him in the first part of verse 29?

32. Thomas did not answer this question. Do you think seeing Jesus again was the sole reason Thomas believed, or do you think it was the culmination of his journey of faith? Explain your thoughts.

33a. Who does Jesus say are blessed, according to the second part of verse 29?

b. Look up the word "blessed". Using a definition that applies here, explain what you think Jesus meant by his statement in verse 29.

34a. What does verse 30 tell us is not included in the Book of John?

b. Jesus performed over 25 miracles that are recorded in one or more of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke but are not included in the Gospel of John. Name three of them.

35. What two reasons are given in verse 31 for what is recorded in the Book of John?

36. CONNECTION: Jesus called those who believe without seeing “blessed.” Though none of us walked with Jesus as did the apostles, we have their eyewitness accounts of His signs and teachings recorded in His Word. Many of us also have experiences in our lives that we can point to; moments when Jesus felt so present to us that we could say, “I know that Jesus is the Son of God, that the Bible is true, and that my faith is real and solid.” Describe such a moment in your life. What prompted that realization?

Growing in faith is a process, and God promises to be involved in that process. Begin your time with the Lord today confident “That the one who began a good work in you will continue it until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6) Write a prayer of thanksgiving for all that the Lord has done in your life to grow your faith.

Read Lesson 19 John 20:1-31 in the *Meditation and Commentary on the Gospel of John* by Rev. Alfred McBride, O. Praem. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) © 2010, 1991, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

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