

Easter Encounters (1 of 5)

Small Group Discussion Questions

PUBLIC WORSHIP DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The global pandemic COVID-19 has forced us to adjust and adapt how we do church and stay connected to one another as a congregation. We're not closed as a church, we're just doing church differently! So, please stay connected to the body at Grantham Church. Join our congregation for worship in-person with restrictions or online at 10:30 am each Sunday morning via our Grantham Church YouTube Channel. For more information, please go to the [Grantham Church Live](#) page at our website.

As usual, the sermons will be posted to the [recent sermons page](#) on our website and at the [Grantham Church Podcast](#) the following day, along with the small group discussion questions under Worship Resources. Thank you for staying connected with us!

Sunday, April 18th 2021



Sermon Title: Joy Comes in the Morning

Scripture Reading: Psalm 30:1-5; Luke 8:1-3; John 20:1-18

Sermon Focus: In order to understand why the risen Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, it's important to know her backstory. When we consider what the gospels tell us, we see that Mary had means, but she also had her demons! That is until Jesus delivered her and gave her a new identity and purpose. Listen as Pastor David shares how Mary's faithful devotion resulted in an Easter encounter that changed everything.

Thank you for going deeper in conversation with your small group in person, by phone, or video call! Use the following questions to guide your small group discussion:

1. Pastor David begins by giving us Mary Magdalene's backstory in Luke 8:1-3. He said that due to tradition, Mary has been associated with and misidentified as the unnamed prostitute in Luke 7:36-50. Instead, Mary appears to have been a wealthy woman from Magdala (affluent fishing port) whose life and choices had led to her being demonized. So, once she is healed and delivered, she then uses her wealth to support the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. How does this knowledge change your understanding of Mary and the power of her witness?
2. Pastor David said that some scholars believe that Mary's seven demons are related to what we call the "seven deadly sins" mentioned in the Bible, i.e., pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, and sloth. These sins would certainly seem to fit someone who had extreme wealth with no moral compass and wasn't a follower of Jesus. How does Mary's story of being demonized through her wealth challenge the church in America? How might her story apply today?
3. Read John 20:1-18 together. Put yourself in Mary's shoes. Imagine what she must have thought and how she must have felt. She did not go to the tomb expecting to find Jesus gone (only to grieve more deeply), then to have her grief turned to gladness! Now read Psalm 30:1-5 together. How is God speaking to you through Mary's experience of Jesus giving her joy in the morning?
4. We were invited through this sermon to consider why Jesus appeared to Mary first. Pastor David said it was for the following reasons. It's because she was...
 1. Grateful
 2. Faithful
 3. Resilient
 4. Courageous

Think about how Mary exemplified all of these. Share examples that come to mind. And then share with the group how God is calling you to grow in these.

5. How is God speaking to you through the life and witness of Mary Magdalene? How does it encourage you? How does it challenge you?