

# Adult Teaching Resources

April 1, 2018



## Easter: Keeping Close (April 1-May 20)

### Mark 16:1-8 – “Too Good to Be True?”

Psalm 133, Acts 4:32-35 – “Happy Together”

Luke 24:13-49 (RCL 24:36b-48) – “The Road to Hope”

John 10:1-18 – “The Good Shepherd”

John 15:1-8 – “The True Vine”

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# Too Good to Be True?

Mark 16:1-8

## FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

### Bible Background

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*“So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” Mark 16:8*

Have you ever received good news? Have you ever received the kind of good news that you couldn't wait to tell someone else? Have you ever received the kind of good news that you couldn't wait to tell someone else and you were so excited about it, that you were a little scared and overjoyed at the same time?

Today is Easter Sunday, the holiest day of the Christian year. This day is full of joy and celebration, but nothing like what the women at the tomb experienced that first Easter morning. The story might seem too good to be true, but it's the truth!

### Opening

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After everyone has gathered for your class, ask each person to share their favorite Easter story. The stories can include Easter bunnies, egg hunts, sunrise services, special worship moments, etc. Use this time as a way of sharing and listening to the special stories that help mark this special day.

### Reading the Bible

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According to this Resurrection account, who went to the tomb to anoint Jesus? (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome)

When did the women go to the tomb? (early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen)

What was their biggest concern about anointing Jesus? (the stone was too big for them to move, who would move it?)

What did they find when they arrived at the tomb? (the stone had been rolled back)

What did the women see once they entered the tomb? (a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side) How did they react to what they saw? (they were alarmed)

What did he say to them? (vv6-7)

## Reading the Bible *continued*

How did the women react to his word? (they fled from them tomb, terror and amazement seized them, they said nothing, they were afraid)

## Making Connections

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Read the other Easter accounts in the Gospels (Mark 16, Matthew 28:1-10, Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-22). What are the similarities in the stories? What are the differences? What is the truth from the stories? What truth do you take from the stories?

Our Lesson Writer says the disciples were hiding, avoiding the tomb where Jesus was buried; and the women who went to care for the body were not seen as a threat. Their love for Jesus went beyond the fear of the soldiers. What does the actions and inactions of those closest to Jesus say to you? If you were there, where do you think you would be and what do you think you would be doing?

What do you think went through the women's minds when they saw the stone rolled away? What stories do you think they told each other? If you were there, how would you react?

When else in scripture have you read the words, "Fear not?" What was happening in those stories? What connections can you make with those stories? When do you need to hear the words, "Fear not" or "Don't be alarmed"?

What do the words, "He is risen!" mean to you? What significance do those words hold for your life?

The women ran to tell the disciples the good news. How do you react to the good news? How will you share it? Who will you tell?

## So What?

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Our Lesson Writer states, "The ending of Mark's gospel leaves the reader hanging."

As a large group, take some time and discuss the section our Lesson Writer wrote titled, "An unfinished story."

What did our Lesson Writer say that you agree with? What did you not agree with?

If you were tasked with writing the complete ending to Mark, what would you write?

Then, move to these questions to make the Resurrection more personal:

Why is the story important for people of faith?

What does the resurrection mean for believers?

Where does your life and the Easter story intersect?

## The Challenge

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This week, share this story with someone you mentioned, or thought about, from the question in the Making Connections section.

Who is that person?

When will you share the story?

What will you say?

## Prayer

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*Loving God, Hallelulah! Thank you for the Resurrection. Thank you for defeating death. Thank you for Jesus and his entire story. Help us all to live as Easter people, not just today, but every day. Amen.*

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Remembering differently**—Our earliest written account of the Easter story is Paul’s recitation of an early church credo in 1 Cor. 15:3-8, probably written around 55 A.D.:

“For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.” (NRSV)

The gospels, which were almost certainly written later, added other traditions, which vary. The number and identities of the women are different, for example, as well as the appearance and number of angels at the tomb, and the locations and manner of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances.

In our modern, Western context, historians work diligently to reconcile conflicting accounts, get the most accurate story possible, footnote the differences, and carefully relate the story in chronological order. Modern historians would also tend to discount the role of the supernatural and seek other explanations for unexpected events. Ancient writers, however, wrote with fewer constraints, often passing on traditions they had heard with little concern for variant accounts and with less concern for an accurate chronological scheme.

**Who was there?**—Mark says that Mary the mother (or possibly the daughter) of James, Mary Magdalene, and Salome were first at the tomb (16:1).

Matthew mentions just two women, Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary,” saying only that they “went to see the tomb” (28:1).

Luke implies that there were more: he first says “the women who had come with him from Galilee” followed the burial procession and saw where Jesus was laid before preparing spices and then resting through the Sabbath, as the law commanded (23:55-56). He then says that “they” came at early dawn, bringing the spices they had prepared (24:1). Only after the women reported what they found to the apostles does Luke identify them as “Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them” (24:10).

## Digging Deeper *continued*

John's gospel is even more different. He says that Nicodemus had brought about 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes that were wrapped with Jesus before his burial (19:39-40). John then has Mary Magdalene come to the tomb alone, early on the first day of the week, where she saw that the stone sealing the tomb had been rolled away (20:1).

Despite the inconsistencies, the gospels are agreed on several things: the tomb was empty, it happened early on the first day of the week, women first discovered the empty tomb, and Mary Magdalene was present.

**How many angels?**—While Mark speaks only of “a young man dressed in a white robe” sitting on the right side of the tomb (16:5), Luke says that *two* men, dressed in “dazzling clothes,” suddenly appeared beside the women (23:4). Matthew implies that before the women entered the tomb, they were watching as an earthquake struck and an “angel of the Lord” descended from heaven, rolled back the stone, and sat on it. “His appearance was like lightning,” Matthew says, “and his clothing white as snow” (28:2-3). John says that when Mary Magdalene looked into the tomb, she saw two angels, dressed in white, sitting at the head and foot of the place Jesus had lain (20:12).

Although Mark does not identify the young man in white as an angel, the witness of the other gospels leads us to identify him so.

## The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

### Where does the Gospel of Mark end?

Readers familiar with only the King James Bible may be surprised to learn that there is some question about where the Gospel of Mark ends: the KJV includes 20 verses in chapter 16, with no indication that anything is amiss. When the KJV version was made over 400 years ago, however, translators tended to assume that the reading found in the largest number of Greek manuscripts should be followed, but the careful work of textual analysis in the nineteenth century demonstrated that to be an erroneous conclusion.

Among the thousands of full or partial Greek manuscripts known, the majority of them belong to what came to be known as the “Western” family or tradition, but these can be shown to be later developments of earlier manuscripts, tweaked and adapted to resolve perceived problems or to smooth out the text.

The earliest and best Greek manuscripts are far fewer in number, but preserve a text closer to the original. That is why, even though only four known manuscripts end at Mark 16:8, modern scholars recognize them as preserving an earlier version. These manuscripts are known as Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, both of which are uncials (written in all upper-case letters), plus two minuscules (manuscripts written mainly in lower case letters), numbered 304 and 2386.

Other manuscripts reflect one of two different endings that were appended to the gospel, probably in the second or third century, when well-meaning scribes sought to bring a more standard closure to the gospel. Some of those manuscripts include marginal notes or marks indicating awareness that the additions were secondary.

These optional endings are known as the “shorter ending” and the “longer ending,” with the “longer ending” being the one found in the KJV as vv. 9-20. In both of these endings, the writing style and vocabulary choices clearly differ from the remainder of the book.

This leads us to ponder whether Mark intentionally ended the book with the open-ended sense of amazement in 16:8, or whether there was a longer ending that has been lost, something that could easily happen if the last page of a codex (leaves of papyrus or parchment that were sewn together in book form) came loose and was lost before copies were made.

Some scholars argue that Mark purposefully ended his gospel on a note of suspense, a literary device intended to draw the reader into the story and consider his or her own response to the empty tomb. Others argue, for a variety of grammatical and stylistic reasons, that the original ending has been lost (for a nice discussion of these matters, see R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark* [Smyth & Helwys, 2007], 589-93).

## The Hardest Question *continued*

Like the current end of the gospel itself, the answer remains a mystery. We can't be sure whether Mark intended to end the story here or not. In some ways, we don't like the fearful and unfinished way it concludes. But, that is what Easter does to us: it brings a spirit of awe, and it reminds us that we have unfinished business with the risen Christ.