

Youth 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

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

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

PARENT PREP

Our students are continually writing their own story. The supporting actors may come and go, the scenes may change, and there may be twists and turns along the way, but their stories are continually being written by them. It is their story. You are not the author of this story or are you the main character. So many parents try and insert themselves into the stories of their students to take on a main role, and just like when you are reading a story and can tell when the author is pushing a character on you, your students' story is the same way. Allow your student to write their own story. Be a player in their story, but don't be the main character. Offer grammatical edits when the story is out of whack, but allow them to continue to write it. If you push yourself on them, they will write you out of their story.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip "Opening Scene" from *The Princess Bride*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Why is the book special?
- 2) Why is he apprehensive about having a book read to him? Why does he give it a shot?
- 3) Why does Grandpa think this is such a great beginning to a story?
- 4) The grandson wants to know when the story is going to "get good". What makes a good story?
- 5) On this Easter Sunday, what makes the story of Jesus a "good story"?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Mark 16:1-8. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Who discovers the empty tomb? Where were the disciples? Why did the women go and not the disciples?
- 2) What do you believe the women thought when they saw the stone rolled away? What would have been your reaction when the tomb was empty?
- 3) Why would the women have been terrorized? Why were they amazed? How can you be both of these emotions at the same time?
- 4) The shorter version of Mark ends at verse 8. Why do you think the original writer of Mark ended the story here? Why do you think the longer ending was added later?
- 5) What would it have meant if Jesus had not been raised from the dead?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Why do you believe there are different understandings of what happened when the women went to the tomb?
- 2) Who was at the tomb? Does it matter that the Gospels list different people coming to the tomb?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": Where does the Gospel of Mark end?

Transformation

Conclude your session by distributing paper and writing utensils. As you these items are being distributed, challenge your students to write two things: 1) How they would have ended the Easter morning story when the women leave the tomb. And 2) What the next "chapter" of their story will be now that they have been reminded that it is our responsibility to go and tell the story of Jesus to the world in which we live. If time allows, have students volunteer to read their stories to the larger group.

Close with a prayer of thanksgiving that the story of Jesus does not end with him dead in the tomb, but that the story of Jesus continues with an empty tomb.

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.