

SERIES BIG IDEA

The Easter message tells the story of Jesus' death and resurrection as experienced by one of his close followers, Mary Magdalene.

MESSAGE BIG IDEA

This day could be your unexpected beginning.

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 20:1-18, LUKE 8:2**ICEBREAKER AND OPENING THOUGHT**

These two questions are designed to get the group thinking about the elements that accompany moments of surprise and will set the group up to place themselves in the shoes of Mary Magdalene during the Bible discussion portion of the guide.

BIBLE DISCUSSION

There is a great deal of confusion and surprise in this passage. Notice John adds a comment in verse nine that helps explain their surprise and confusion. Get the group to notice how unexpected the resurrection was to Jesus' followers. Here are a few details you might point out: Mary doesn't recognize Jesus until after he says her name. There is a lot of running in this Gospel passage more so than in any other story in any of the Gospels. There is also the detail that the grave clothes were unwrapped and folded neatly. Why would a grave robber go through all the trouble to do that? Also, the angels appear to Mary and not to the men, but Mary doesn't see the angels until she cries. When Jesus says Mary's name it feels like a greeting, consolation, a mild rebuke (come on, don't you know it's me?), and an invitation all at once. Mary becomes the apostle to the apostles. You may also notice all of the similarities this text has with the first garden story in the Bible (think Genesis 1-3). They both have stories that include these elements: garden, death, two angels, morning, the first day, a woman, and even God (Jesus) walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

This text tells us that God is making a new beginning of all things – a new heaven and a new earth, and he calls you and me into it. He even takes those who have been completely corrupted (Mary possessed by seven demons) and makes them new. None of us are beyond his power.

This text also says something about the God who enters into our grief and has overcome it. It's in our darkest moments that we encounter resurrection. Maybe it's only through tears that we see angels and resurrection.

LIFE APPLICATION

Get the group talking about the ways they'd like to see Jesus transform their lives. This could be about anything: relationships, career, finances, health, marriage, or kids. Draw the group out and then spend time praying together asking Jesus for his resurrection power to be made known in the most important areas of our lives.