

Life Group – You Are Not Alone – Week 2

Connect: What are you celebrating this week or season in your life?
What challenge are you facing in this season in your life?

Sometimes, it only takes one moment to change your life: the birth of a child, an unexpected opportunity, the realization that you've found the thing you love to do and want to spend the rest of your life doing it.

Can you remember a time you experienced something that changed you--even if it was just a small thing?

In today's passage, we will see how Mary Magdalene experienced something life-changing, and it was by all accounts a little thing: Jesus simply said her name. But it wasn't the act that was enormous, it was the circumstances. All it takes is one encounter with the risen Christ to change our lives forever.

Out loud, read John 20:11-18:

Mary's first thought when she saw the empty tomb was a logical one: someone has broken in and stolen Jesus' body. In her grief and horror at the situation, she missed something important. Jesus was standing right there with her.

Many people have a difficult time seeing Jesus, whether it's because of their grief, the difficulty of their situation, or simply just their complacency and refusal to look for Him. When is it difficult for you to see Jesus?

Jesus asked her the same question that the angels had asked, "Why are you weeping?" Then He added, "Whom are you seeking?" (He had asked the mob the same question in the Garden—John 18:4.) It is encouraging to us to know that "Jesus knows all about our sorrows." The Saviour knew that Mary's heart was broken and that her mind was confused. He did not rebuke her; tenderly, He revealed Himself to her.

This was obviously not Mary's first experience with Jesus. She had actually had a long history of following Him. **Read about the first time we see her with Jesus in Luke 8:1-3:**

After calling her name and seeing her obvious relief, Jesus told Mary something interesting in verse 17: *"Don't cling to me," Jesus told her, "since I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."*

Even though she probably wanted nothing more than to sit and just be with Jesus, she had something even more important: she had to run and tell people the good news of His resurrection. She had to go and become the very first disciple tasked with sharing the Gospel.

Mary had a specific task from Jesus. Has He given you a specific task? What is it?

What kinds of things do we sometimes assume are expected of a Christ follower but really God is looking for something different? So what is God looking for from us? (Read Matthew 9:13) In this passage the heart of God is revealed. God desires mercy, not sacrifice. This is a quote from Hosea 6:6, and it's not just telling us that God wants us to love people more than he wants us to observe ritual holiness. It's telling us that his deepest desire, the thing that is most important to him in all the world, is that people come to him, experience his love, and find themselves washed clean. It's not only a message to us, but also a message for us. God is a God of mercy. He doesn't want perfection; he wants his children to experience his forgiveness and to draw near.