

Study Guide
“The Defining Message of Easter”

Monday - Luke 24:1-12

Even Jesus’ death didn’t dim the women’s loyalty. They returned to Jesus’ tomb “very early in the morning on the first day of the week.” They went to care for his body as soon as the Sabbath laws allowed. They didn’t find his body, but did find two men in gleaming clothes who said, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He isn’t here, but has been raised.” They reported this to the eleven, but true to form for their day, “their words struck the apostles as nonsense, and they didn’t believe the women.” In what ways does the fact that he was not in the tomb shape your life? “Peter ran to the tomb ... he saw only the linen cloth. Then he returned home, wondering what had happened.” Luke showed clearly that not one disciple expected Jesus to rise, though Jesus had told them just that (cf. Luke 9:22). How vital to your faith are the eyewitness reports that Jesus told his disciples in advance what would happen, as well as the eyewitnesses who saw Jesus alive? The disciples didn’t believe the women and they couldn’t recall Jesus’ own words enough to believe them. Ask God to give you a heart that is attentive to Jesus’ words and willing to believe them.

Tuesday - Luke 24:13-24

Just as Luke shared details about Jesus’ birth that no other gospel included, his research found this unique story about the resurrection day. Jesus, unrecognized, walked with two disciples discussing recent events. They were disillusioned, sad about the crucifixion, and stunned that some women said Jesus’ body was not in the tomb. Note that these two followers gave no sign that they believed the report—just that it puzzled them. Scholar N. T. Wright noted, “It wasn’t simply ... that they couldn’t recognize him. This is a strange feature of the resurrection stories, in Matthew (28:17) and John (20:14; 21:4, 12) as well as here ... Jesus’ body, emerging from the tomb, had been transformed. It was the same, yet different—a mystery we shall perhaps never unravel until we ourselves share the same risen life.” In what ways does Easter make you long to share that risen life, to experience dimensions, that for now, remain mysterious to us?

Wednesday - Luke 24:25-32

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus interpreted for his discouraged followers “the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets.” As he broke and blessed bread for them, they recognized him in a flash of insight and memory. His transformed body then disappeared, but they joyfully realized that their hearts were “on fire” as Jesus made the Bible clear. The two disciples on the road may well have been husband and wife. Verse 29 says they urged their unrecognized companion to stay with them. If they hadn’t, they would have missed the awesome moment of recognizing that it was Jesus. How disciplined are you, individually and as a family, about inviting Jesus into your life and your home life? How have you learned to recognize his presence in the midst of everyday life?

Thursday - Luke 24:33-49

After meeting the Risen Christ at Emmaus, the two disciples rushed back to share the news with the others. As they were speaking, Jesus himself appeared. Luke reported in detail that he was no ghost, but physically alive. Jesus again explained the Scriptures to the disciples and commissioned them to share his message of repentance and forgiveness of sins. “You are

witnesses,” he said, promising that God’s power would help them spread his message. But Jesus’ words in verse 48 apply to us today as much as they did to his first disciples. Jesus calls you to share that hope with others. In what ways does believing that Christ rose from the dead change your heart and life? How does the resurrection make credible for you Jesus’ claim to have the divine authority to forgive our sins and thus transform our hearts? In what ways can you be a “witness” and share the hope of the resurrection with others this week and throughout the year?

Friday - Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:1-8

From the Gospel of Luke, Jesus’ story continued directly into his “volume 2,” the book of Acts. Before leaving earth, Jesus charged his followers to bear witness to him, but not based on their own courage or cleverness. Instead, they were to wait for the Holy Spirit’s power. In Acts 1:15, we read that “the family of believers” included about 120 people. And yet, Jesus had the sheer audacity of telling 120 people in a small Roman province that they should reach out “to the end of the earth.” Jesus set before them the vast scope of: “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” How did Jesus’ vision and commission make it imperative for his followers to always keep a mission-driven, outward focus for their life together? What implications does this have for our life together as his church today? Jesus ordered his disciples “not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised.” We tend to be driven and impatient people. How would you react if Jesus told you not to try to do important work for him on your own, without God’s power? What spiritual risks can “going it alone” pose for a Christ-follower?

(Adapted from COR)