



Every year Easter comes and goes. For many, it's become just another long weekend; a holiday that once carried deep meaning but now amounts to little more than family gatherings and chocolate bunnies. But Easter is so much more. For those who follow Jesus, there has never been a more important day. This is the day the Son of God walked out of a borrowed tomb, victorious over sin, triumphant over death, crushing the serpent's head once and for all. This is the day that proved his sacrifice was accepted, his mission complete, and his love for you deeper than you dared imagine. Yet that first Easter morning didn't land the same way in every heart. Some refused to believe. Some couldn't bring themselves to believe. And some, who had once believed, had already walked away in failure and shame. Not much has changed. This Easter, we're going to look at that morning through four different sets of eyes. And our prayer is that the truths of God's Word will do more than inform you, but that they'll draw you into deep affection, deep devotion, and ultimately deep transformation. May Easter not just reach your eyes, but grip your heart!

WEEK 1

The Agnostic – Pilate

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea, a career politician who had climbed the ranks of imperial power. When Jesus was brought before him, Pilate found himself face-to-face with the most significant decision of his life—and he had no category for it. The Jewish leaders wanted Jesus dead, but Pilate couldn't find any fault in him. What follows is a fascinating exchange between the Son of God and a man who represents every person who has ever stood at the crossroads of belief and walked away unchanged. Pilate's famous question—"What is truth?"—echoes through the centuries as the quintessential agnostic moment. He was standing in front of Truth incarnate, and he turned and walked away.

JOHN 18:33–40

³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" ³⁵ Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." ³⁸ Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him. ³⁹ But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" ⁴⁰ They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.

WEEK 1
LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you knew the right thing to do but chose to do nothing? What held you back?
2. When you hear someone say “What is truth?” today, what do you think they really mean by that question?

DIVING DEEPER

3. Read John 18:28–32. The Jewish leaders wouldn’t enter Pilate’s headquarters because they wanted to remain ceremonially clean for Passover. What irony do you see in their concern for ritual purity while seeking to execute an innocent man?
4. In verses 33–35, Pilate asks Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?” What do you notice about how Jesus responds? Why do you think he answers a question with a question?
5. Jesus tells Pilate that his kingdom is “not of this world” (v. 36). What does this reveal about the nature of Christ’s kingship? How might Pilate’s political mind have struggled to understand this?
6. In verse 37, Jesus says, “Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate responds with, “What is truth?” Do you think this was a sincere philosophical question, a cynical dismissal, or something else? Explain your reasoning.
7. Pilate declares three times in the Gospels that he finds no guilt in Jesus (John 18:38; 19:4, 6). Yet he still hands Jesus over to be crucified. What does this tell us about knowing the truth versus acting on it?

8. Compare Pilate's response to Jesus with the response of the centurion at the cross (Mark 15:39). Both were Roman officials, both witnessed Jesus's final hours. What made the difference in their conclusions?

9. Imagine you had a friend who said, "I'm not sure truth can really be known. Everyone has their own truth." How would you respond to them using what Jesus says in this passage?

10. Pilate had every opportunity to recognize and receive Jesus, yet he chose political convenience over truth. In what ways are we tempted to do the same—to acknowledge Jesus intellectually but not let that acknowledgment change how we live?

11. What is one area of your life where you've been standing before Jesus, hearing his voice, but haven't yet acted on what you know to be true? What would it look like to stop asking "What is truth?" and start following the One who is Truth?

WEEK 2

The Backslider – Peter

Peter was the bold one. The one who drew his sword in the garden. The one who swore he'd die before denying Jesus. And then the rooster crowed. Three times Peter denied even knowing the man he had followed for three years—and Luke tells us that Jesus turned and looked at Peter in that very moment. The weight of that look sent Peter out into the night, weeping bitterly. Peter represents every believer who has failed spectacularly, who has said things they couldn't take back, who has wondered if they've disqualified themselves from grace. But the story doesn't end at the denial. After the resurrection, Jesus sought Peter out—not to condemn him, but to restore him.

LUKE 22:54–62

⁵⁴ Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. ⁵⁶ Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." ⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." ⁵⁸ And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." ⁵⁹ And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." ⁶⁰ But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." ⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly.

WEEK 2 LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever been absolutely certain you would never do something—and then found yourself doing exactly that? What happened?
2. What do you think is the difference between guilt and shame?

DIVING DEEPER

3. Read Luke 22:54–60. Notice that Peter’s denials escalate in intensity: first to a servant girl, then to another person, then to a direct accusation. Why do you think it became easier for Peter to deny Jesus with each repetition?
4. Verse 61 is unique to Luke’s account: “And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.” What do you imagine was in that look? What do you think Peter saw in Jesus’s eyes?
5. Peter “went out and wept bitterly” (v. 62). Compare this with Judas’s response to his betrayal in Matthew 27:3–5. Both felt remorse, but their paths diverged drastically. What made the difference?
6. Now read John 21:15–17. Jesus asks Peter three times, “Do you love me?” Why do you think Jesus asked this question three times? What is the significance of that number?
7. Notice that John 21:9 tells us Jesus had prepared “a charcoal fire.” The only other place this Greek word appears is in John 18:18, where Peter warmed himself by a charcoal fire during his denial. What do you think is the significance of Jesus choosing this setting for Peter’s restoration?

8. With each of Peter's declarations of love, Jesus responds with a commission: "Feed my lambs... Tend my sheep... Feed my sheep." What does this reveal about how Jesus restores those who have failed? What is the relationship between receiving forgiveness and being given responsibility?
9. Read 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." How does Peter's story demonstrate both the confession and the cleansing promised in this verse?
10. If you had a friend who confided that they had walked away from their faith and didn't think they could come back, how would Peter's story shape what you would say to them?
11. Peter went from denying Jesus to preaching boldly at Pentecost (Acts 2) and eventually dying as a martyr for his faith. What does his trajectory teach us about what God can do with our failures?
12. Is there an area of spiritual failure in your past that you've been carrying as shame rather than bringing to Jesus for restoration? What would it look like to hear Jesus ask you, "Do you love me?" and to answer him honestly this week?

WEEK 3

The Outsider – The Thief on the Cross

Two criminals hung on crosses beside Jesus that Friday. Both were guilty. Both were condemned. Both were dying. But only one entered paradise. The thief on the cross represents everyone who has ever felt too far gone, too broken, too late. He had no time to clean up his life, no opportunity to be baptized, no chance to prove himself through good works. He had nothing to offer Jesus except his need—and that was enough. In his final breaths, this outcast made a confession of faith that rivals any in Scripture: “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And Jesus’s response is the gospel in its purest form: immediate, unearned, complete salvation.

LUKE 23:39-43

³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?” ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³ And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

WEEK 3
LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever received grace or forgiveness from someone when you didn't deserve it? What was that experience like?
2. What do you think it would feel like to know you had only hours left to live?

DIVING DEEPER

3. Read Luke 23:32-34. Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Who do you think "them" refers to? How might the criminals hanging beside him have heard this prayer?
4. In verses 35-39, notice the different responses to Jesus on the cross: the rulers scoff, the soldiers mock, and one criminal rails at him. What do all these responses have in common?
5. The second criminal rebukes the first with the words, "Do you not fear God?" (v. 40). What do these words reveal about the transformation already happening in this man's heart?
6. In verse 41, the thief acknowledges his guilt: "We are receiving the due reward of our deeds." Why is this confession of personal guilt an essential part of coming to faith? How does our culture make this kind of admission difficult?
7. The thief also declares of Jesus, "This man has done nothing wrong" (v. 41). How could he know this? What does his declaration reveal about his growing understanding of who Jesus is?

8. Consider the thief's request: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (v. 42). What does this request assume about Jesus? What is remarkable about the thief's faith given what he's witnessing?
9. Jesus responds, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise" (v. 43). What does this promise reveal about salvation? What does it not require?
10. Compare the thief's salvation with Paul's statement in Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works." How does the thief's story illustrate this truth?
11. If someone told you they had done too many bad things to be forgiven, how would you use this passage to respond?
12. The thief couldn't do anything to earn his salvation—he simply believed. Is there something you've been trying to earn from God that you need to simply receive? What would it look like to rest in grace this week?

WEEK 4

The Believer – Mary

While the disciples hid behind locked doors, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. This woman, from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons (Luke 8:2), had followed him faithfully to the cross and now came to honor him in death. What she found instead was an empty tomb—and she wept, thinking someone had stolen his body. But then the gardener spoke her name: “Mary.” And in that single word, she recognized her risen Lord. Mary Magdalene represents every believer who has stayed close to Jesus through suffering and sorrow, whose devotion has been tested by disappointment, and who has discovered that Easter morning changes everything. She was the first to see the risen Christ—and the first to proclaim the resurrection.

JOHN 20:1–18

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” ³ So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. ⁴ Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷ and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to their homes. ¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” ¹⁴ Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.

WEEK 4
LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Describe a time when grief or disappointment made it hard to see what was right in front of you.
2. How does hearing your name spoken by someone who loves you affect you?

DIVING DEEPER

3. Read John 20:1-2. Mary came to the tomb “while it was still dark.” What might this detail reveal about her devotion to Jesus? How does the imagery of darkness connect to the larger themes of John’s Gospel?
4. In verses 3-10, Peter and John run to the tomb, see the linen cloths, and then go home. But verse 11 says Mary “stood weeping outside the tomb.” What does her lingering tell us about her?
5. The angels ask Mary, “Woman, why are you weeping?” (v. 13). Jesus then asks her the same question in verse 15. Why do you think they both asked this question? What does it reveal about God’s concern for our grief?
6. Mary mistakes Jesus for the gardener (v. 15). What might have prevented her from recognizing him? What does this teach us about how grief, assumptions, or circumstances can blind us to Jesus’s presence?
7. Everything changes when Jesus speaks her name: “Mary” (v. 16). Compare this with John 10:3, where Jesus says the Good Shepherd “calls his own sheep by name.” What is significant about Jesus calling Mary by name? What does this reveal about his relationship with his followers?

8. Mary responds with “Rabboni!” (v. 16), an Aramaic word meaning “my teacher.” What does this title reveal about her relationship with Jesus? Why might this have been her instinctive response?
9. In verse 17, Jesus tells Mary, “Do not cling to me.” Why might Jesus say this? What was changing about their relationship now that he was risen?
10. Jesus commissions Mary to go to the disciples with a message: “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (v. 17). What is remarkable about Jesus referring to his Father as “your Father” and his God as “your God”?
11. Mary becomes the first witness to the resurrection and the first evangelist, declaring, “I have seen the Lord” (v. 18). In a culture where women’s testimony was often dismissed, why do you think Jesus chose Mary to be the first to see him and the first to proclaim the news?
12. Think about the four people we’ve studied in this series: Pilate the agnostic, the thief as outcast, Peter the backslider, and Mary the believer. Which of these characters do you most identify with in this season of your life? Why?
13. Mary came to the tomb in darkness and left in light, having encountered the risen Christ. As we conclude this Easter series, how has your understanding of the resurrection deepened? What is one way you will live differently because of what we’ve studied together.