



UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Through the Bible | *September 29 - October 5* | *John 20*

Things to Know

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Discussion Questions

1. Mary's encounter shows how Jesus meets us in grief (vv. 11–16). How have you experienced Christ's presence in seasons of sorrow?
2. The disciples received peace and mission when Jesus appeared (vv. 19–23). How does Jesus' resurrection bring you peace in fearful circumstances today?
3. Thomas doubted until he saw the wounds of Christ (vv. 24–29). How does Jesus meet us in our doubts, and how can the church be a safe place for honest questions?

4. John's purpose statement (vv. 30–31) is for all who read. How does this chapter strengthen your faith personally?
 5. Which character's encounter resonates most with your own walk with God right now, and why?
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Read

Read John 20:11-29 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
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Scripture

John 20:11-29

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

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,[a] "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.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews,[b] Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” **20** When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. **21** Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” **22** And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”

Jesus and Thomas

24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin,[c] was not with them when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” **27** Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” **28** Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” **29** Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

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John 20:11-29

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources - September 29 - October 5

Small Group Curriculum: John 20

Small Group Curriculum: Encountering God from Different Standpoints

1. Session Overview

John 20 records the greatest encounter in history: the risen Christ appearing to His followers. Each person encounters Jesus differently—through grief, fear, doubt, or mission. This chapter shows us that encountering God is personal, transformative, and always centered on the risen Christ.

2. Opening (Prayer & Icebreaker)

- Icebreaker: Share about a time when someone's presence completely changed your perspective on a situation (a parent showing up, a friend visiting in crisis, etc.).
- Prayer Prompt: "Lord, help us to encounter You like those in John 20, and let our lives be transformed by Your resurrection."

Encourage breaking into pairs or triads: "Is there any way we can pray for our personal walks with God this week?"

3. Scripture Reading

Read John 20 aloud as a group. (Option: assign sections to different readers to capture the flow of the narrative.)

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

A. Mary Magdalene (John 20:1–18) – Encountering God in Grief

- Mary comes in sorrow, expecting death, but encounters the living Christ.
- Jesus speaks her name, showing that encountering God is deeply personal.
- Her grief turns into mission: “Go and tell my brothers.”

Commentary: Mary is the first witness of the resurrection. This emphasizes that Jesus meets us in brokenness and entrusts the gospel to unlikely messengers.

B. The Disciples (John 20:19–23) – Encountering God in Fear

- The disciples hide in fear, but Jesus appears with peace: “Peace be with you.”
- He breathes the Spirit on them, commissioning them for mission.
- Fear is replaced by peace and purpose.

Commentary: Encountering the risen Lord transforms paralyzing fear into Spirit-empowered courage.

C. Thomas (John 20:24–29) – Encountering God in Doubt

- Thomas doubts until he touches the wounds of Christ.
- Jesus graciously meets him where he is and calls him to faith.
- His confession: “My Lord and my God” becomes one of the clearest declarations of Christ’s divinity.

Commentary: Doubt does not disqualify us; when met with Christ, it becomes a pathway to deeper faith.

D. The Reader (John 20:30–31) – Encountering God in Faith

- John shifts to address us directly: these signs are written so that we may believe.
- Encountering God through Scripture is meant to lead to eternal life in Christ.

Commentary: John invites every reader into the same encounter with Jesus that transformed Mary, the disciples, and Thomas.

5. Discussion Questions

1. Mary's encounter shows how Jesus meets us in grief (vv. 11–16). How have you experienced Christ's presence in seasons of sorrow?
2. The disciples received peace and mission when Jesus appeared (vv. 19–23). How does Jesus' resurrection bring you peace in fearful circumstances today?
3. Thomas doubted until he saw the wounds of Christ (vv. 24–29). How does Jesus meet us in our doubts, and how can the church be a safe place for honest questions?
4. John's purpose statement (vv. 30–31) is for all who read. How does this chapter strengthen your faith personally?
5. Which character's encounter resonates most with your own walk with God right now, and why?

6. Application Points

- Personal: Jesus calls us by name; our encounters with Him are personal and transformative.
- Communal: Just as He gave peace and mission to His disciples, Jesus sends us out together as witnesses.
- Missional: Like Mary, we are to run and tell others what we have seen and heard.

Challenge: This week, share your personal story of encountering Christ with at least one person.

7. Closing Reflection & Prayer

- Reflect: “Where do I see myself in John 20—Mary, the disciples, Thomas, or the reader?”
- Prayer Focus: Thank God for the resurrection. Pray for courage, peace, and opportunities to witness.

8. Memory Verse

John 20:31 – “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

9. Leader’s Notes

- Emphasize Christ’s gentleness: He meets each person differently—grief, fear, doubt, or faith.
- Encourage vulnerability in discussion, especially when addressing grief and doubt.
- Keep the focus on Christ as the center of every encounter—He is the one who transforms.
- Consider ending with a brief testimony of your own encounter with Christ as an example.