

Apostles Houston
Life Group Study: John 20:19-31

Love and Laughter

Creating a Sacred Space

Welcome→ Embrace→ Refresh

Remembering Our Purpose

Why Do We Do Life Groups? (*feel free to communicate this in your own words*)

In Acts 2, we read how early Christ followers devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. In Life Groups we follow their example with the hope of becoming more like Jesus, the goal of our salvation.

Being Known

Story Telling

We believe that loving God and others begins by being known.

In 5-7 minutes, what do you want us to know about yourself (~5Hs)?

Pray and Celebrate

Be sure to honor whatever is good or beautiful about their story, and ask one or two people to pray over those who just shared.

Following Up

Responding to God's Word

In our last meeting, we were encouraged to spend time doing *lectio divina* on your own. How did that go? Did God speak to you? Is this a practice you will continue using?

Hearing the Word

Hearing: (*Read "Context" and then John 20:19:31. Then pray for God's grace to understand.*)

- Before we dive in, what are some big themes that stand out to you as significant in this passage? Or from the sermon this past weekend?
- Even hearing Mary's testimony, the disciples were hiding away afraid of persecution. Yet, upon encountering Jesus they are "sent out" (v 21) into the world. How are we tempted to be spiritually closed off and afraid? How does an encounter with Jesus empower us to be sent into the world? What does this look like in your life?
- In v 23, we read that Jesus has entrusted us with the power to forgive sins (or not) on his behalf. The sense here is not so much on the forgiveness of sins itself but on the delegation of Jesus' authority. What does it mean for us to now have Jesus' missional/priestly authority in the world? Is that a comforting or a worrying thought?
- In v 31, we are told that this was written so that we may believe the proclamation of Jesus as Christ and Son of God and therefore have life in his name. Jesus is both Israel's promised Messiah and the second Person of the Trinity. How do each of these affirmations influence how you hear the Gospel? How you see God? How do we live in light of these attestations?
- The disciples needed to encounter Christ to believe. Yet, just because we do not see him physically before us, that doesn't mean we can't encounter Jesus today. How have you encountered the Risen Lord this Easter? (ex. Palpable experience of Jesus at Easter worship; God speaking to you through a song, nature, Scripture.)

Obeying (application):

- As you pray this week, imagine yourself having an encounter with the Risen Lord. Visualize Jesus entering the room with you and speaking to you "Peace be with you." Ask him your questions. Feel him breathe his Spirit into your life. Worship him as your Lord and your God.

Soul Care

Prayer Requests

This week, break up into groups of MEN and WOMEN for prayer. Along with sharing prayer needs, create some space for confession. Pray for God's grace to repent and be healed.

Announcements: Volunteers needed for VBS on July 22-25. Email [Sarah](#) to sign up.

Teacher's Notes

Context

This week's passage comes immediately after Jesus' first resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene. The disciples have not yet seen the risen Jesus, but Peter and another disciple have seen the empty tomb. We meet the disciples on Easter Sunday evening, huddled behind locked doors and afraid of persecution. As we read, consider what the disciples must be feeling. Remember, while Jesus had promised his resurrection, they hadn't understood him and didn't expect to see him again.

Specific Insights

- The passage doesn't specify how it was that Jesus came to stand before them. Some have read this as an attribute of Jesus' resurrection body that he could appear without being constrained by the locked door. However, for our study let us focus more on what he does once he appears. He promised them peace which is a direct response to the fear they are said to experience. Secondly, he breathes on them his Spirit which echoes the original breath of life God bestowed on humanity at creation. (Gen 2:7) After receiving the Spirit, the disciples are commanded to be sent out *just as Jesus* was sent. The same Spirit that descended on Jesus at his baptism to empower him for ministry is likewise poured out to his disciples and to us.
- There is a strong similarity between this passage and Matthew 18:18 which reads, "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Both passages have to do with the forgiveness of sins yet the context is different. John locates this saying after the resurrection especially because it is only after the cross and resurrection that sins are forgiven. That is, forgiveness is only possible because of Jesus' Passion. Therefore, his disciples are now only able to forgive as they do so *on behalf of* the crucified and risen Jesus.
- Jesus as Messiah is the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. He reveals God's faithfulness to his people and to his promises. Yet, as God, Jesus also reveals the nature of who God is—a God so loving that he would give his life for us. In his Passion, Jesus inaugurates a new creation and invites us to participate in our vocation of our true humanity: image bearers of a crucified God.
- Jesus addresses us directly when he says in v 29, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." This beatitude applies directly to us! Even though we did not physically see Jesus in the First Century, we can still have encounters with him now. For example, Jesus appears (post-ascension) to Paul on the Road to Damascus in Acts 9. Encounters with Jesus need not always be visual. Sometimes we can encounter Jesus in moments of worship, in the Eucharist, in Scripture.