

Because He Lives Week 1

Discussion & Reflection Guide

John 20:1-18 “When the Gardener Calls Your Name”

Opening Reflection

1. What stood out to you most from the message or passage this week?
2. Where did you feel most personally connected to the story: Mary, the disciples, or somewhere else?

Seeing the Story Clearly (Observation & Understanding)

3. What details in John 20:1-18 show that the first Easter began in grief and confusion rather than celebration?
4. Why do you think Mary didn't recognize Jesus at first? What might that reveal about how people experience God?
5. What is significant about Jesus speaking Mary's name? Why is that the turning point in the story?
6. What do you notice about the order of events: Mary encounters Jesus first, and then she is sent to tell others? Why does that matter?

Digging Deeper (Theological Reflection)

7. The sermon emphasized that the resurrection is about **renewal, not escape**. What does that mean, and how does it challenge common ideas about heaven or the Christian life?
8. How does the “garden” setting connect to the idea of new creation (Genesis)? Why might John include that detail?
9. What does this passage teach us about how Jesus relates to people in grief, doubt, or confusion?
10. How does this story reshape what it means to “believe” in Jesus, not just intellectually, but relationally?

Personal Reflection (Heart-Level Questions)

11. Where in your life right now do you feel like Mary: grieving, confused, or unsure what God is doing?
12. Have you ever experienced a time when God was at work in your life, but you didn't recognize it until later? What happened?

13. Do you tend to “stay” in difficult seasons with God, or do you tend to pull away? Why?
14. What would it look like for you to truly believe that Jesus knows you personally: your story, your struggles, your name?

Application (Living It Out)

15. What does it look like this week to bring your **real self** to Jesus instead of a “cleaned-up” version?
16. Where might you need to trust that God is present even if you don’t fully see or understand what He’s doing?
17. What is one practical way you can “stay” with Jesus this week (prayer, Scripture, community, worship, etc.)?
18. If Jesus is calling you personally, what might He be inviting you to do or surrender right now?

Looking Ahead

19. The next part of the story deals with fear and doubt (John 20:19-31). Where do you see fear or doubt showing up in your own life right now?
20. What would it look like to invite Jesus into those places instead of hiding them?