

**Acts 10:34–43 or
 Isa. 65:17–25**
Ps. 118:1–2, 14–24
**1 Cor. 15:19–26 or
 Acts 10:34–43**
**John 20:1–18 or
 Luke 24:1–12**

Easter Sunday

Goal for the Session

Youth will proclaim Jesus Christ risen in the dead places of their lives.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Luke 24:1–12

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Gregory A. Robbins

The women whom the evangelist names (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary “the mother of James”) are, for the most part (Susanna is not explicitly mentioned here), the very ones singled out in 8:1–3 as having provided for Jesus’ Galilean ministry “out of their resources.” These women from Galilee, who had witnessed Jesus’ crucifixion (23:49), who had seen the tomb and the deposition of his corpse therein (23:55), are the ones who, when “they found the stone rolled away” and the body missing, tell it “to the eleven and to all the rest” (24:2, 9). Surprisingly, not one of their names is found on the slate of candidates put forward to fill Judas’ vacancy (Acts 1:21–26), even though they fit all the enunciated eligibility requirements for taking his place in “this ministry and apostleship”!

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Martin E. Marty

Thanks to these first-day witnesses, there came later sets of witnesses, namely members of a community that kept the saving story alive long enough for Luke to stitch together a rich narrative. Our reading or hearing their story moves “you,” whether you are named Mary or Joanna or not. Finally, thanks to all of them, twenty centuries later, we, who were not there to “see,” have now also “seen” and get to pass on the story to people who also were not there and to whom nothing was “proven.” They can be amazed and can tell others.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” John K. Stendahl

Let us exhibit our faith and our joy, not defensively or dishonestly, but with bold confidence. Such proclamation, excitedly retelling the story and being unafraid to love the peculiar ways in which each witness tells it, serves the community. The community that saw the risen Lord, not dead but alive (as in 1 Cor. 15), and that came to know him in the reunderstanding of the Scriptures and in the breaking of the bread (as in Luke’s Emmaus story), retells the discovery again as it encounters the tomb of his burial.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Nancy Claire Pittman

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?” the angelic figures say to the tops of the women’s heads. We are just as guilty of such a fruitless search. We cling to former visions of ourselves and our churches as if they might come back to life as long as we hold on to them. We grasp our loved ones too tightly, refusing to allow them to change, to become bigger, or smarter, or stronger. The words of the unworldly messengers are a challenge to stop hanging on to the dead and to move into new life. They are reminders that the Holy One dwells wherever new life bursts forth.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Luke 24:1–12

YOU WILL NEED

- ☐ several raw eggs
- ☐ bell
- ☐ copies of Resource Sheet 1
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ small stones
- ☐ green leaves (plastic or real)
- ☐ small chocolate Easter eggs (use alternative in case of food allergies)

For Responding:

- ☐ option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, pens
- ☐ option 2: heavy-weight plastic, paper cross shapes, white glue, food dyes, craft sticks, hairdryer (optional)
- ☐ option 3: plastic Easter eggs, chocolate eggs, sheet of paper, pen

For Art Connection:

- ☐ Internet access

Be prepared with clean-up materials because if the egg is rotated away from its vertical position or there is a flaw, it will break easily.

Focus on Your Teaching

Teenagers who have been involved in the church know that Easter is about more than bunnies and chocolate eggs. They know that Easter Sunday is a celebration of Jesus' resurrection, but they may be puzzled about what happened and what this event means. Some youth are concrete thinkers, and explorations of belief, doubt, and faith may be challenging. They need adults willing to ask, "What do you think?" and to be open to their responses. They also need adults who are willing to talk about beliefs and uncertainties, helping youth to make connections to faith.

O God, help me to see the mystery and wonder of Christ's resurrection through the eyes of the youth. Amen.

■ LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, if choosing option 3 in Responding, arrange with leaders of children's groups for children to participate in the scavenger hunt. For Closing, hide chocolate eggs in the meeting space (several per person).

Greet youth as they arrive and invite them to participate in a game. The task is to hold a raw egg between index finger and thumb and squeeze it, trying to break it. Ask the group if they believe this is possible. Why or why not? Demonstrate how to hold the egg straight up and down, with index finger on the top point of the egg and thumb on the base of the egg. Then ask several volunteers to try to break the egg. Discuss:

✠ What makes something easy or hard to believe?

Explain that this week's Bible reading describes something that happened on the first Easter Sunday that was hard to believe. Pray:

Holy God, be with us in our questions, and open us to wonder and awe this day. Amen.

EXPLORING

Begin by testing the group's knowledge of the events of the Easter story. Designate three zones in the meeting space (A, B, C) and gather the group in the middle. Explain that you will ask questions with three possible answers, designating each answer to a zone. When you ring the bell, have youth run to the zone they think represents the correct answer. Encourage the youth in each zone to discuss their reasons for selecting the answer. Wonder aloud if any of the youth have lingering doubts about the correctness of their responses. On the second bell, youth can change zones if they change their minds.

Possible questions: On what day of the week did Jesus die? (Thursday, Friday, Sunday); Where was he buried? (the Garden of Gethsemane, in a cave, in a tomb on Golgotha); How many days were between Jesus' death and resurrection? (One, Two, Three)

After the game, sit together and discuss what influenced their choices or made them want to change their minds.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (At the Crack of Dawn). Explain that after Jesus' death, some women wanted to finish preparing Jesus' body for burial. However, they had to wait because the next day was the Sabbath, a holy day when work was forbidden. Ask for two readers, with the rest of the group participating in the "All" lines of the dramatic reading.

Following the reading, ask youth to find Luke 24:1–12 in their Bibles, and look at verse 11. Discuss:

- ✠ Why do you think it was so hard for the other disciples to believe what the women were saying?
- ✠ Do you think the women were surprised when no one believed them? Why or why not?
- ✠ What might be some reasons that Luke decided to tell the story through the eyes of the women?

Before his death, Jesus had told his followers that no matter what happened, they would see him again, but it seemed to be an impossible thing to believe.

Say that there are many different beliefs about what happened, but everyone agrees that something happened to change the lives of Jesus' family and followers. Invite youth to think about some significant events that have happened in lives. Ask:

- ✠ In what ways did these events change your life?

Comment that the risen Christ is still changing people's lives today, helping to bring hope and transformation into the places that feel dead. Invite silent reflection on the next two questions if that would be easier for group members:

- ✠ What are some places that feel dead in your own life?
- ✠ How does Jesus' resurrection help you imagine new life in these places?

RESPONDING

Choose one of the following learning activities:

1. **I Believe, Even Though . . .** Youth will explore their experiences of doubt and belief, and write statements of faith. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Seriously? Seriously!) and pens and invite youth to respond to the first set of questions. Then encourage them to think about some of the hard times in their lives and complete the resource sheet. When they are finished, ask youth to think of ways their experiences of doubt and belief in Jesus' resurrection might be of help to someone who is struggling with faith. Challenge the youth to look for opportunities to express their unique personal faith as an encouragement to someone else.
2. **Mirror Crosses** Youth will make cross shapes as reminders that the risen Christ brings new life in dead places. Explain that the empty cross is a symbol of Jesus' resurrection. Distribute supplies and follow these instructions: place a cross shape under a piece of

EASY
PREP

A hair dryer will speed up drying time but warn youth not to get too close to the plastic, which can shrink or melt.

For a large number of children, form youth into teams to create a hunt for each class in a different part of the building.

plastic; spread a thick layer of white glue in that shape; add a few drops of food coloring to the glue; swirl drops with a craft stick, adding more drops if desired. When dry, peel cross shapes off the plastic. Encourage youth to stick these onto a mirror at home (moistening the back). Challenge them to look for an opportunity to explain the meaning of the empty cross to another person. How might the cross be an encouragement to someone experiencing doubts about faith and life?

3. **Easter Scavenger Hunt** Youth will proclaim the risen Christ by planning an activity for children in the congregation. Talk about eggs as symbols of new life and have youth fill plastic egg shapes with chocolate eggs. Help them create a scavenger hunt in the church building by making a list of clues indicating areas where eggs can be found (such as, “where the choir sits”; “where colored light comes in”; “where songs are found”; “where the minister preaches”). Have youth hide the eggs and gather children from their classes. Ask a youth to read aloud the clues and encourage the rest of the group to help children hunt for eggs. When each child has found some eggs, gather as a whole group and invite youth to retell the story of Easter Sunday to the children. Note: Check for food allergies and be prepared to offer an alternative.

CLOSING

Give each person a stone and a leaf. Invite the group to participate in the following ritual:

Leader: Sometimes in the dead places of our lives it is hard to remember that there can be new life. *(Invite youth to take turns placing their stones in the middle of the circle.)*

Leader: Then Easter comes, reminding us that there is always hope. In Christ’s rising, we remember that new life is possible. *(Invite youth to take turns placing their leaves on top of the stones in the middle of the circle.)*

Close by inviting youth to repeat the following Easter affirmation after you:

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Celebrate together by inviting youth to hunt for the chocolate Easter eggs.

■ ENHANCEMENT

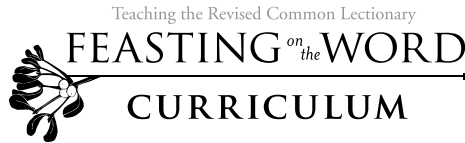
ART CONNECTION

After the devastation of Jesus’ death, the experience of Easter formed a new community of believers. Witnessing Jesus’ resurrection eventually transformed a group of frightened, doubtful disciples into powerful apostles, ready to teach and preach the gospel. Look together at the video of time-lapse photography. Ask:

- ✿ How do these images tell a story of resurrection and transformation?
- ✿ The music that accompanies the images is called “Digital Heartbeat.” Would this be a good title for an experience of new life in dead places? Why or why not?

Go to <https://vimeo.com/69225705> for a time-lapse video by Daniel Csobot.

April 17, 2022
Easter Sunday



Youth
Resource Sheet 1

At the Crack of Dawn

(A Dramatic Reading based on Luke 24:1–12)

Reader One: } At the crack of dawn on Sunday, the women came to the tomb,

All: } carrying the burial spices they had prepared.

Reader Two: } They found the entrance stone rolled back from the tomb,

All: } so they walked in.

Reader One: } But once inside, they couldn't find

All: } the body of the Master Jesus.

Reader Two: } They were puzzled, wondering what to make of this. Then, out of nowhere it seemed,

All: } two men, light cascading over them, stood there.

Reader One: } The men said, "Why are you looking for the Living One in a cemetery?"

All: } He is not here, but raised up.

Reader Two: } "Remember how he told you when you were still back in Galilee that he had to be handed over to sinners, be killed on a cross, and in three days rise up?"

All: } Then they remembered Jesus' words.

Reader One: } They left the tomb and broke the news of all this to the Eleven and the rest.

Reader Two: } Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them kept telling these things to the apostles,

All: } but the apostles didn't believe a word of it, thought they were making it all up.

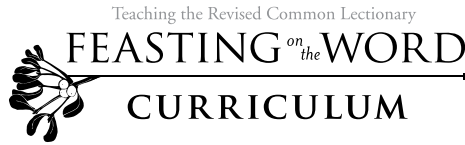
Reader One: } But Peter jumped to his feet and ran to the tomb.

Reader Two: } He stooped to look in and saw a few grave clothes, that's all.

All: } He walked away puzzled, shaking his head.

Scripture taken from *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* by Eugene H. Peterson

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Youth
Resource Sheet 2

Seriously? Seriously!



Every day we make decisions about who and what to believe. Sometimes we believe something because we understand or trust it. And sometimes we believe things even when we don't understand them. Use these questions to help you think about belief and doubt.

How do you decide whether something is true or not?

What are some things that would make you doubt that something is true?

When have your doubts felt like an experience similar to dying?

Sometimes having faith means believing and proclaiming things that you can't fully understand.

Who would you ask for advice about faith and belief?

When has your faith helped you through a difficult time?

On the back of this paper, write some "I believe . . . even though . . ." statements about these times.