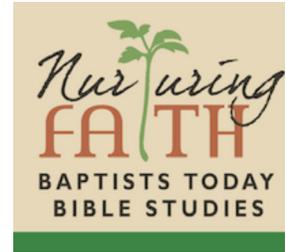


Adult Teaching Resources

March 27, 2016



Season of Lent (February 10-March 26)

When Old Becomes New — 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

God's New Thing — Isaiah 43:16-21

The Dark Night Before the Dawn — Luke 23:1-49

Ladies First — Luke 24:1-12

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Ladies First

Luke 24:1-12

FIT Teaching Guide

by Rick Jordan

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Before the Lesson: Make copies of the handout “Urban Legends?” for the Information session.

Fellowship Question

Use *one* of the following to break the ice, to begin discussion, and lead into the study:

Did you ever believe the Easter Bunny was real? If so, when did you discover it was not real?

Name one woman who has been influential in your spiritual life.

Information

[Distribute pens and the handout, “Urban Legends?”]

Take a look through these urban legends. Which do you think are true, urban legends, or a mixture of truth and falsehood?

[After the class members have marked their answers and check them against the key...]

How did you do on the first five statements?

Which did you think were “too good to be true?”

What did you think of number six when you first read it?

The Easter story is an amazing story. It is impossible, unbelievable, and too good to be true. Yet, millions of people believe this story that is fundamental to the Christian religion. We’ve heard the story many times, but let us hear it again today. And, for today, let’s pay particular attention to the role of women in this story.

[Have a class member read Luke 23:54-56.]

We will be given the women’s names in the next chapter. From what Luke tells us about them, what are some assumptions we might make about them? (they were faithful followers of Jesus; they did not hide; They knew what they wanted to do to Jesus’ corpse, but had no time to do it; they were faithful to the Jewish Sabbath laws, etc.)

Let’s look at another passage from earlier in Luke’s gospel that talks about these women.

Information *continued*

[Have a class member read Luke 8:1-3.]

What are further assumptions we can make about these women? (they travelled with Jesus and the twelve disciples; they had radical transformations of spirit and body because of Jesus' power over evil and illness; at least one of them, Joanna, seems to have left family behind to follow Jesus; there were many women who followed Jesus, but these three must have been the most well known to have been named by Luke; they financially supported Jesus' ministry, etc.)

These women travelled with Jesus' caravan and supported his ministry financially. While the disciples dispersed during Jesus' trial, beatings, and crucifixion, the women remained.

[Have a class member read Luke 23:48-49.]

If some things are too good to be true, this must have seemed too horrible to be true. We can imagine the grief of close friends at a violent, unjustified death. We can imagine that these women passed through stages of grief of shock, denial, anger, bargaining, and deep sorrow. They may have felt other emotions, such as righteous indignation or guilt.

But when Jesus' body was taken from the cross, there was no doubt that Jesus was dead. They wanted to prepare his body for the tomb, to wash away the blood stains and anoint the body with perfumes. But, that would have been against the Jewish Sabbath laws.

Sometimes, in grief, we look for anchors. We feel adrift and need something solid and permanent to hold onto. How do you suppose Sabbath was that for these women?

Yet, it was not an ordinary Sabbath. Eugene Peterson says, "It is not far-fetched to imagine Jesus' friends and followers spending the twenty-four hours of Jesus' Sabbath rest in the tomb, also resting — remembering and observing. The entire city was keeping Sabbath; they would also be keeping it. It is unlikely, I think, that they would have gone to synagogue or temple; worshipping with the leaders who had conspired in the crucifixion of Jesus would have put their own lives at risk." [Eugene H. Peterson. *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans. 2005. p. 128.]

Sabbath was a day of rest. No errands to run. No meals to cook. No work to do. It was a day to reflect on the creation and the Creator who rested on the seventh day. It was a time to remember our place in the great scheme of things. "William Willimon puts it well: 'Sabbath keeping is a publicly enacted sign of our trust that God keeps the world, therefore we do not have to. God welcomes our labors, but our contributions to the world have their limits. If even God trusted creation enough to be confident that the world would continue while God rested, so should we.'" [Ibid, 129.]

"The world would continue while God rested" — how do you think that idea affected the women on that Saturday?

Finally, the Sabbath ended. The women went to work, gathering supplies and perfume, and taking that long walk to see their loved one's lifeless body.

Information *continued*

[Have a class member read Luke 24:1-8.]

The gospel writers give us different details about this morning that are difficult if not impossible to blend into one story. There are different accounts of when and how the stone was rolled away, different accounts of who the first witness or witnesses were, different accounts of the number and character of the beings/persons greeting the first visitor/s.

However, there are some consistencies in the gospel accounts. For one thing, no one expected Easter to happen — even though, several times, Jesus told them what would happen. And another consistent thread through the gospel accounts, as The Bible Lesson writer says, “Jesus was dead, truly dead. Not sleeping. Not in a coma. Dead...And, as far as anyone in Jesus’ world knew, death was final...Their whole purpose in visiting the tomb was not to see if Jesus was still there, but to prepare his body for permanent residence.”

How does your translation describe the women’s emotion on coming to the empty tomb? Is this what you would expect them to feel? Why are they not fearful? Why are they not joyful?

In verse five, the women have a different emotion. What is it? (the women are fearful due to the two men’s sudden and dazzling appearance)

Two powerful emotions — perplexity and fear — are normal emotions in a time of crisis. Then, something calms their fears and gives them understanding. What does that do for them? (remembering Jesus and his words; remembering Jesus’ prophecy of his resurrection, etc.)

[Have a class member read Luke 24:8-12.]

How do you feel about the disciple’s reaction to the women’s story?

There was no scopes.com to check the validity of the women’s story. The assumption was, if a story comes from a woman, it’s got to be wrong. An idle tale, an urban legend. We might wonder, though, how long the disciples would have not known about Jesus’ resurrection if not for the women. These men did not go to the tomb at daybreak. So, the women became the first to see and testify the good news of Jesus’ empty tomb. Do you think Luke was making a point about women as witnesses for (or even preachers for) Christ?

Transformational Exercise

In verse eight, how are the men referred to? (the eleven) They had been known as The Twelve. What had happened that Luke does not tell us in his gospel account? (Judas has died.) These were the “twelve disciples” who had followed Jesus for three and an half years.

Then Luke gives them a different description in the next verse, Luke gives them a different nomenclature. What does he call them? (apostles)

The word “apostle” means “one sent” as a messenger. What do you think Luke is saying in changing the nomenclature of these men from “the eleven” to “the apostles”?

One preacher puts it this way: “If the Jesus story ended on Friday, then the disciples can

Transformational Exercise *continued*

simply be ‘the eleven,’ and after the appropriate rituals and a season of mourning, they can go back to life as it was. If the story ended on Friday, then they can be ‘the eleven,’ alumni of Jesus’ school of religion, students of an inspiring though finally tragic teacher. In short, if the story ends on Friday, we can close out the Book of Luke. But if the news of Sunday is true, they must become ‘apostles,’ those sent to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth... and we will need a Book of Acts with the apostles as its main actors.” [“Empty Tomb, Empty Talk,” Thomas G. Long, *The Christian Century*, April 4, 2001. <http://www.christiancentury.org/article/%252Fempty-tomb-empty-talk>]

On this Easter Sunday, I would like for us to reflect in silence on our role as bearers of this story. Are we living as mere “alumni of Jesus’ school of religion”? Or, are we living as apostles — ordinary people sent out with an extraordinary story to share with others?

In silent prayer, stand before the Risen Christ and hear him ask, “Are you an alum or an apostle?”

[Close in a prayer something like this: *Help us to be as dedicated to you as Luke describes these women, O God. May we stand by you and with you and for you. Transform us from mere hearers of your word to bold bearers of your word. Thank you, God, for Easter! Alleluia! Amen.*]

Comments or Questions for Rick Jordan? You may send comments to the lesson plan author at rjordan@cbfnc.org. Rick is also available to lead workshops and conferences on Christian Education, with particular emphasis on how best to use the FIT Faith model.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Jesus’ tomb — No one knows exactly where the tomb of Jesus was. Catholic tradition points to a site inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre that is now covered by a dark chapel beneath a large dome. Many Protestants believe a site known as the “Garden Tomb” is a more likely spot, as it is located near a hill that bears a similarity to a skull, though 2,000 years of erosion makes it unlikely that the hill is very similar to the way it appeared in Jesus’ day. It has changed considerably, even in the past two decades.



Still, visiting a tomb that reminds us so much of the Easter story can be an emotional experience.

Wondering? — While Mark says the women had wondered how they might move the stone (Mark 16:3) and Matthew says there was an earthquake as an angel swooped down to roll back the stone and sit on it (Matt. 28:2), Luke does not suggest that the women thought moving the stone would be an issue: after all, in his story, there were a number of women.

Risen, or raised? — The verb translated “he is risen” is in the passive, indicating that Jesus was not just risen, but had been raised by God, which Luke clearly intended readers to understand. Thus, “has been raised” would be a better translation than “he is risen.”

The phrase “he is not here, but has been raised” is missing from a few manuscripts, but is present in the most reliable ones. Surprisingly, though the phrase appears in v. 6 of the Greek, the NRSV puts it at the end of v. 5.

Did Peter run alone? — While Luke names only Peter as a disciple who ran to check out the women’s story, John’s gospel says he had company. The Fourth Gospel’s version differs in a number of ways: in it, Mary Magdalene went alone to the garden and discovered the empty tomb. Upon returning, she met Peter and “the other disciple, whom Jesus loved,” understood as the apostle John (the traditional understanding is that John authored the Fourth Gospel, but modestly did not identify himself by name). According to John 20:1-10, Peter and the other disciple raced to the tomb, with the other disciple arriving first but standing back, so that Peter went ahead of him into the tomb.

Headlines — One of my favorite Easter stories was told by Thomas G. Long, in his book *Whispering the Lyrics: Sermons for Lent and Easter* (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing Co., 1995). The story concerned a small town pastor named Clint Tidwell. It happened that the owner

Digging Deeper *continued*

and editor of the local newspaper was an active member of his church. The editor thought Tidwell was one of the finest preachers around, and he often published a summary of the Sunday sermon in Monday's newspaper. The down side is that the editor didn't hear very well, so he often misunderstood what the pastor had said, so Tidwell was frequently astonished to read accounts of his sermons that had little to do with what he actually said.

One of Tidwell's most surprising experiences came, however, when the editor understood his message all too clearly. One year, early on Easter Monday, the pastor shuffled out of the house in his robe and slippers to get the morning paper before breakfast. Long before he reached the paper, he could see that the headline was in huge type, as if something astounding had happened. Had war broken out, he wondered? Had a cure for cancer been announced? Had the president been shot?

As he drew close enough to make out the words of the banner headline, he was startled to read TIDWELL CLAIMS JESUS CHRIST ROSE FROM THE DEAD. His first thought was to be embarrassed, and to feel a bit foolish. But didn't Paul say that the gospel may seem to be foolishness to the world, but it is everything to those who believe?

If we truly believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, shouldn't it impact our living so clearly that others can see our faith as if it was written in banner headlines? May this Easter morning challenge us to live in such a way that others can see Christ risen not only in our words, but in our lives.

(I first ran across this story in *Pulpit Resource*, edited by Will Willimon, in the April-June issue of 1998, p. 14.)

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Why is Easter so important?

Christmas is perhaps the most beloved of Christian holidays, and one in which even unbelievers or semi-believers share. Those who think about it, however, understand that Easter is the highest and holiest day of the year for the simple reason that our faith and our hope and our lives depend on it. Let's unpack that statement: we celebrate Easter because our *faith* and our *hope* and our *lives* depend on it.

Our faith depends on it . . . When Jesus predicted that he would die and rise from the dead, and then fulfilled his promise, there was a sense in which his resurrection validated everything else he had said and done. If the resurrection did not take place, then our faith is in vain and we are all wasting our time. But, if the resurrection did in fact occur, the fulfillment of Jesus' prediction confirms the truth of his other teachings, as well.

During his earthly life, Jesus was known for the authority with which he taught. When he stood up to teach in the synagogue at Nazareth, the people were amazed, the gospel says, "for he taught as one who had authority." The authority Jesus had in life and his claim of relationship with God was affirmed and solidified through the resurrection. In the introduction of his letter to the Romans, Paul said that Jesus was "designated Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4).

Our hope depends on it . . . Not only does the resurrection strengthen our faith, but it is also the source of our own hope that there is more to life than this life. In some marvelous, mystical way beyond our human comprehension, the resurrection of Christ provided the key to our own resurrection.

When Peter spoke of our "*living hope*," he said it came "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:4). Paul echoed that thought when he insisted: "He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also with Jesus" (1 Cor. 4:14).

Our own hope of spiritual life beyond physical death depends on what we see in Jesus. In his poem "The Wasteland," T. S. Eliot reflected on the biblical idea that we are made from dust and will return to dust by saying "I will show you fear in a handful of dust." But believers may respond by singing "Because he lives, I can face tomorrow; because he lives, all fear is gone . . ."

Our lives depend on it . . . But there is also this life to live, isn't there? And it's not always easy. The resurrection impacts our daily living in various ways. It strengthens our faith and gives us hope, but it also reminds us that we are called to a new and different kind of life. If the resurrection is really true, then we ought to be paying attention to what Jesus says! We are called to be living a different kind of life.

The Hardest Question *continued*

Every time we practice baptism, we symbolize the death and resurrection of Christ, and the commitment we are making to walking in a new way, living a new life. Even Paul's primary argument for better behavior was based on his belief in the resurrection: "Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

It was after the resurrection, after his ascension into heaven, that Jesus sent his Spirit to dwell in us and guide us and empower us to obey his teachings and to live the kind of lives that bring him honor. That's why we sing "You ask me how I know he lives, he lives within my heart."

Thus we can proclaim "Christ is risen!" Our faith depends on it. Our hope depends on it. Our lives depend on it, and should be different because of it.

Easter matters.

Urban Legends?

According to the Snopes.com website in early February 2016, these were some of the most popular urban legends. Which do you think are true, legends, or a mixture of truth and falsehood? (Key answers are taken directly from the Snopes.com site.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Baby carrots are made from deformed full-sized carrots that have been permeated with chlorine.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">True Legend Mixture</p> | <p>4. A study proved that pineapple juice is five times more effective than cough syrup.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">True Legend Mixture</p> |
| <p>2. A woman managed to call 911 during a domestic abuse incident by pretending to order a pizza.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">True Legend Mixture</p> | <p>5. Southwest Airlines is giving away free air travel tickets to those who follow online links.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">True Legend Mixture</p> |
| <p>3. Victims of domestic violence can effectively send out a secret signal for help by drawing black dots on their palms.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">True Legend Mixture</p> | <p>6. A political prisoner in a Middle Eastern country was beheaded, but was restored to life within a few days.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">True Legend Mixture</p> |

1. Mixture. Labels that say "baby carrots" appear on packages of very young carrots that are harvested while the vegetables are still quite tiny. Labels that proclaim "baby-cut carrots" appear on packages of petite carrots made by chopping down and polishing much larger versions of the vegetable. Carrots are treated with chlorine to prevent E.coli.
2. Legend. The story making the rounds in 2014 seems to be based on a 2010 commercial for the Norwegian Women's Shelter Association.
3. Mixture. The black dot campaign is merely one person's idea for helping victims of domestic violence; it is not an officially-sanctioned program, and it is not taught to police officers, doctors, counselors, or anyone else who may be able to help someone in an abusive relationship. While victims of domestic violence can certainly draw a black dot on their palms, they should not rely on that symbol's bringing anyone to their aid.
4. Legend. We found no current research proving pineapple juice is five hundred percent, five times, or any other multiplier more effective than cough syrup at alleviating cough symptoms, suppressing cough, dissolving mucus, or hastening recovery time from a cold.
5. Legend. Southwest Airlines has responded to such scams by issuing messages on Twitter that read: "Hey folks! There is a scam being passed around on Facebook about a 2 free ticket offer from SWA. Please don't click or share the links!"
6. OK, this is not from the snopes.com website. But is it be any more believable than what Christians celebrate on Easter?