

Risen!

FOCUS ATTENTION

BEGIN: Begin the session by leading the group to name television game shows. Write responses on a board, and circle those that are based on facts or knowledge.

RESPOND: Continue the discussion about game shows by directing attention to the first paragraph on page 61. Stress that the more firsthand knowledge one has, the greater the confidence and trust.

DISCUSS: *If you were a contestant on a game show, to whom would you reach out if allowed to get assistance with one question? What are your reasons for selecting that person?* (p. 61)

TRANSITION: *When we consider the resurrection of Jesus, we find confidence in knowing that the accounts in the Bible are filled with firsthand knowledge.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Enlist a volunteer to read the session title and summary statement on page 60—*Risen! Jesus' resurrection assures believers of salvation*. Summarize the information from Understand the Context (p. 61) to identify the sequence of events leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus. Conclude by reading aloud the Roman

soldier's comment when Jesus died: "*ruly this man was the Son of God*" (Matt. 27:54).

TRANSITION: *Jesus died and was placed in a tomb. The distress found in the events leading up to this point was about to be reversed.*

READ: **Enlist a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 28:1-4**, while the group listens for reactions and responses by various people at the tomb of Jesus. Invite the group to share words and key phrases, and write these on a board.

- **(28:2)** The angel did not move the stone to let Jesus out of the tomb. His resurrection had already taken place, and the tomb was empty by then. Instead, the angel's action allowed Christ's followers to enter the tomb and understand that God had raised Him from the dead.
- **(28:4)** Roman soldiers were tough men, known for their strength and courage. Yet they fainted when faced with God's power. Once they recovered, they likely abandoned their posts completely. Their presence was not mentioned when the women arrived.

SEARCH: Form three groups, and assign each group one of these: Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, the angel, and the guards. Instruct the groups to search the Scripture and information about verses 1-4 in the

Day 1 Daily Exploration (p. 65) for the reason their assigned people were at the tomb and their response after getting there. Invite a spokesperson from each group to share highlights of their discussion.

ASK: *How do the details given instill assurance that Jesus was resurrected?* (p. 63)

TRANSITION: *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary visited Jesus's tomb to anoint His body—but instead they discovered the empty tomb that attests to His resurrection.*

READ: Direct the group to read **Matthew 28:5-7** and locate the way the angel calmed the women while announcing Jesus's resurrection. Lead the group to identify key words and phrases from the passage. Add these to the list on the board.

- **(28:5)** The angel urged the women to not be afraid. The Greek structure is a command to stop doing something that's already being done. The angel told them to release their fears. Angles offered similar encouragement to Zechariah (Luke 1:13), Mary (Luke 1:30), and the Bethlehem shepherds (Luke 2:10).
- **(28:6)** The angel assured the women that Jesus has risen. The Greek verb is passive, meaning Jesus was acted upon. He had been dead and could not raise Himself. Instead, Christ rose through the power of God the Father. The angel confirmed this in two ways. First, he reminded the women that Jesus had told them about His resurrection (Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31). Even His enemies knew about this claim (Matt. 27:62-66).

HIGHLIGHT: Direct attention to **Pack Item 5** (*Poster: Matthew 28:6*), displayed on the wall. Lead the group to identify the factual evidence the angel provided in Matthew 28:6. ("He is not here." "He has risen.") Point out that the angel backed up his facts by inviting the women to step into the tomb and see for themselves. He knew the resurrection of Jesus was true, and he wanted to make sure others knew this to be true as well.

EMPHASIZE: Direct the group to search verses 5-7 and locate instructions the angel gave the women. Discuss responses, which may include, "Don't be afraid," "Come and see," and "go quickly and tell." Ask: **Why was it important for the women to act with urgency in delivering the news of the resurrection? Should that same urgency be felt today? Explain.** (p. 63)

TRANSITION: *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were obedient to the command given by the angel of the Lord. The news of Christ's resurrection and message for the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee was not information that could afford delay.*

READ: **Enlist two volunteers to read aloud Matthew 28:8-10.** Instruct one volunteer to read the narrative that describes the women's actions, and the other to read the words of Jesus in quotation marks.

- **(28:9)** Rather than a ghost or spirit, Jesus appeared with a physical—though heavenly—body. This is clear from two things Matthew mentioned in verse 9. First, the women recognized Jesus. They came up to Him, which indicates they were familiar with Him. Second, Matthew said they took hold of his feet, a common act of submission in the first-century

Near East. This would have been impossible if Jesus was just a spirit. Instead, they were able to touch Him like any other person.

RESPOND: Invite the group to highlight the element in the passage that stands out most to them. Add to the list on the board, and allow time for them to explain their responses.

STUDY: Place the group into pairs, designating one person to review information in the Day 3 Daily Exploration (p. 66) that relates to the women's actions and response. Instruct the other person to review the same information for Jesus's actions and direction to the women. Guide them to share their observations with each other and with the group, as time allows.

DISCUSS: *How was the encounter with Jesus critical for the women? How does an encounter with Jesus change a person's view of Him?* (p. 63)

TRANSITION: *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were commissioned to tell the remaining disciples of the resurrection and call them to travel to Galilee.*

READ: Direct the group to read **Matthew 28:16-20** and notice the disciples' response to Jesus. Point out that "some doubted," but it was more hesitation or confusion than skepticism. Ask: *What might cause a person to doubt the resurrection despite the eyewitness accounts?* (p. 63)

- **(28:20)** Christ offered His personal presence while ministering on earth, and He assures His followers that His spiritual presence will remain until He returns to earth. He won't leave His people but will dwell with them for eternity.

FOCUS: Direct attention to Matthew 28:19-20, which is known as the Great Commission. Point out that Jesus wants us to know Him personally and follow His teachings and to help others do the same. Explain that *go* indicates a continual action or lifestyle. *Baptizing* and *teaching* further indicate the necessary steps involved in fulfilling His command.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Direct attention to the words and phrases listed on the board during the session. Ask: *Which of these is most significant to you? Why? How does this affect your understanding of Christ's resurrection?*

RESPOND: Lead the group to respond to the third question set under Apply the Text (p. 64): *Discuss as a group the role your group has in helping your church accomplish the different elements of the Great Commission. What actions can your Bible study group take this week that would lead to faithfully living out this command?*

PRAY: Conclude the group time with prayer, praising God for the reality of Christ's resurrection and the assurance of salvation for believers.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the lesson by encouraging the group to follow up on guests who attend on Easter. Discuss ways you can continue to share the truth of the resurrection with those who have never heard.