



**Sermon Based Small Group  
Leader Discussion Guide**

**Sermon Title: "From Discouragement to Divine Encounter"**

**Sermon by Pastor Tom Harrington  
Week of April 24, 2011**

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<b>Session Objectives (Group Leader)</b>	<p><b>By the end of the session, group members should be able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand what causes people to feel discouraged.</li> <li>• Name two ways that the empty tomb cures discouragement.</li> </ul>
<b>Personal Connection (Group Leader)</b>	<p><b>How does my story connect to the reading?</b> To prepare to lead this Bible study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think about times that you have been discouraged.</li> <li>• Ask yourself what advice/help do you offer a friend who is discouraged.</li> <li>• Pray for each member of your group by name.</li> </ul>
<b>Icebreaker</b>	<p>Two options (choose one)</p> <p>Think of a time when you felt discouraged. How did it affect your daily routine? What brought you out of it?</p> <p>When something upsets you, who is the first one you tell?</p>
<b>Big Idea</b>	<p>No matter how discouraged you may feel, you need to realize that the cure is in the empty tomb.</p>

**Sermon Text**

John 20:1-18 NIV

**The Empty Tomb**

<sup>1</sup> Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. <sup>2</sup> So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

<sup>3</sup> So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. <sup>4</sup> Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, <sup>7</sup> as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. <sup>8</sup> Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. <sup>9</sup> (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

**Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene**

<sup>11</sup> Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb <sup>12</sup> and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

<sup>13</sup> They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” “They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” <sup>14</sup> At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

<sup>17</sup> Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

<sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

**Learning more about the lesson**

**\*According to The Interpreter's Bible, "It was Christ's resurrection that made the Christian church, that transformed a huddle of dispirited and frightened men into that valiant band ready to dare anything and doing it; that brought into being and set in motion this mighty force which has been told nearly across the whole world and changed the face of humanity.**

**If the risen Lord had not appeared, there would be no shout of good news, but only the setting forth of a right and gallant enterprise that failed; the story of a heroic soul who, risking everything for mankind, went down and perished; and of God himself throwing in all he had- all God's all- against the power of sin and evil, but in vain. "**

Discouragement- feeling of despair in the face of obstacles.

a feeling of having lost hope.

Discouragement is no doubt what the disciples and those close to Jesus were feeling after the crucifixion.

Reread verses 1-3.

1) What did Mary Magdalene assume when she saw the empty grave?

**\*Grave robbing was a common practice at that time.**

Reread verses 4-9.

The two disciples that Mary Magdalene went to tell were John and Simon Peter. Immediately they both ran to the grave.

<sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, <sup>7</sup> as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

2) What is the significance of the way in which the burial clothes were found?

**\*If the tomb had been robbed, the burial clothes would have been in disarray.**

<sup>8</sup> Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.

3) What did John believe?

**\*Leader notes in bold.**

At that moment John realized that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead.

Reread verses 10-16.

Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb and looked inside again.

4) What do you think she was hoping to find?

**\*The Interpreter's Bible "It was because Mary was seeking a dead Christ that she could not find him. For he was not dead but alive."**

5) Do you think some people today still seek a dead Christ? Why or why not?

**\*The Interpreter's Bible "For all her searching, it was not Mary Magdalene that came on Christ, but Christ who found her. That is the whole point of the Gospel—that God is seeking us."**

Luke 15:4 Suppose one you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the 99 in the open country and to after the lost sheep until he finds it?

Reread verses 15-16

6) At what point does Mary realize that the man she is talking to is Jesus?

John10:3 He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

7) How has Jesus spoken your name in a time of grief? How did it affect you?

8) What things could cause us to not recognize Christ when he is calling to us?

9) What, specifically, do discouraged people need that can be found in the empty tomb?

**\*Leader note: Hope, joy, and fellowship with God. The resurrection is the clinching argument for the reality of life in the Kingdom of God. It provides grounds for hope, since nothing in heaven or earth – not even death – can ever separate us from the love of God. It is the basis for Christian joy, because we know that the biggest issues in life are settled, and settled in our favor. And we have fellowship with God (see 1 John 1:3, 'Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ') so we know that we are never alone or abandoned.**

Reread verses 17-18

Jesus tells Mary to go to "his brothers" and give them a message. He had

	<p>previously referred to them as servants and as friends, but now refers to them as brothers.</p> <p><b>* <u>The Interpreter's Bible</u> "But here he takes a further step, and speaks of them and to them as my brethren. That indeed was not altogether new. Once when a man interrupted him to tell him that his mother and brothers out on the edge of the crowd were asking to speak to him, he stretched out his hand to his disciples and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother (Matt 12:49-50). But these men of whom he was thinking now had not done the will of God, but had lamentably failed. Yet he will not lose faith in them, nor his affection for them. So true is it, as the writer to the Hebrews tells us, the he is not ashamed to call us brothers, as he well might be.</b></p>
<b>Taking it Home</b>	<p><b>How will I live it? Apply it?</b></p> <p>1)Take time throughout the week following Easter to reread this passage.</p> <p>2) Thank God for the empty tomb which allows us to realize that we have the "cure" for discouragement.</p> <p>3) Share this good news with someone this week.</p>
<b>Looking Ahead</b>	<p><b>How can I prepare for the next Small Group meeting?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite your group members to attend "Community," 9:00-10:00 Sundays in the fellowship hall.</li> <li>• Sermon text for next Sunday, May 1, 2011, Psalm 118-5-9</li> </ul>
<b>Prayer Focus</b>	<p><b>How can I connect with God and others through prayer?</b></p> <p>A group Care Coordinator is responsible for recording prayer requests and praises and e-mailing them to the group during the week.</p> <p>Allow members to pray for each other as needs are voice. After the study encourage members to share prayer request and praises.</p>
<b>Updates</b>	<p><b>Announcements from:</b></p> <p>Care Coordinator  Outreach Coordinator,  Social Coordinator</p>