

feeling unshakable, a lightened heart, joyful expression, a restful body, joy in God's presence?

3. God wants to be with You

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- Matthew 28:19-20 NIV

Just before Jesus returned to heaven, He commissioned His disciples to make disciples of all nations. But He assured them that He would be with them always.

God wants to be with us. What are some of the ways you meet with Jesus? What kinds of things tend to keep you apart from Him and when do you find yourself closest to God?

WRAP-UP

On Easter Sunday, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, but the original event was met with a mix of emotions—joy, doubt, fear, and uncertainty. The disciples didn't immediately celebrate; instead, they struggled to make sense of what had happened. This reflects our own experiences, as we too often face situations in life that leave us feeling confused or disheartened. In such moments, we may believe myths like "everything happens for a reason," "I can fix this myself," or "God has abandoned me," when in fact, God's Word offers deeper truths. Even when life feels like the pieces don't fit, the resurrection reminds us that Jesus is alive, sin and death have been conquered, and we are never alone. God invites us to draw near to Him in our struggles, and through His presence, we can find peace, hope, and lasting joy.

MEMORY VERSE

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." - John 16:33 NIV

Challenge – What do you need God to make sense of in your life? Spend some quiet time in God's presence. As you draw near, listen for His voice to help you make sense of it, but first pause to delight in the presence of your loving Father.

Easter Sunday **When the Pieces Don't Add Up**

INTRODUCTION

On Easter Sunday we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. But if you read through the details of that event, you find that not everyone was celebrating that day. We'd like to think that Jesus walked out of the tomb to cheers and hugs and everyone was happy. But the reactions of the disciples were more complex than that. There were doubts, fears, disappointments and uncertainty even after Jesus rose from the dead. We will all face times when the pieces don't add up in our lives. We too may face doubts, fears, disappointments and uncertainty. So, what difference does the resurrection of Jesus mean to us today?

Ice Breaker

Do you enjoy completing jigsaw puzzles or do you find them more frustrating than fun?

Key Passages

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

- Matthew 28:16-17 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Barriers to Faith

Most of us reading this study have made a decision to follow Jesus. But there are many in our lives who haven't yet come to faith.

Think of someone you know who isn't yet a Christian. What have they said, or what do you think, is the barrier to faith for them?

The barrier to an unbeliever's faith might not be what you think it is, or even what they say it is. We need to look deeper than the explanation of "I just don't believe it is true."

Do you know if that person you just thought of, had one of these things happen in their life:

- A loss - of a career, relationship, dream, etc.
- They read something about suffering and evil in the world
- They were hurt by someone or by the church
- An impactful circumstance, like a significant diagnosis
- They were dealing with doubts without anybody to process it

When we face these kinds of turning points in our lives, things just don't seem to make sense, and the pieces don't add up. And when that happens, we feel stuck and so we may "fill in the blanks" with what are essentially myths we tell ourselves. But God's Word tells a different story.

Myth 1- There is a purpose in this.

Maybe we try to convince ourselves that something good is going to come about because of the bad thing we are experiencing (Romans 8:28). We say, "It has a purpose." And while God is able to use adverse circumstances for good, that doesn't mean every bad event in our lives is due to God trying to teach us a lesson.

What are two other reasons we experience pain and sorrow in our lives in the verses below?

7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. - Galatians 6:7 NIV

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." - John 16:33 NIV

Myth 2 – I can fix this myself.

Most of us pride ourselves on our independence or our ability to handle any situation ourselves.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. - John 15:5 NIV

What does Jesus say about our efforts independent from Him? What do you do when you find things are beyond your limitations?

Myth #3 – God has abandoned me.

When all else fails us, we may believe that God has also failed us or that we have done something that bars our access to Him.

38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow--not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.

- Romans 8:38 NLT

What reassurance do we have that we will always have access to God's love?

The truth is that sometimes bad things happen, and that life doesn't always make sense. But rather than turning from God in those moments, they are the times we need to draw near to Him with our doubts, fears and disappointments. God is with us when the pieces don't add up.

2. Jesus is Alive

When we read the story of the disciples after Jesus died and rose from the dead, we see they experienced a roller coaster of emotions. Nevertheless, their proclamation was that Jesus is alive and because of that, sin and death have been conquered.

What do you imagine it would be like as his disciples began to grasp the significance of the victory of the cross? Paul declares this truth in the verse below.

55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" - 1 Corinthians 15:55 NIV

David prophesied of the faithful one, Jesus, the Messiah's resurrection and what it means to us in Psalm 16 when he said, "you will not let your faithful one see decay."

7 I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. 8 I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, 10 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. 11 You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. - Psalm 16:7-11 NIV

What are the many benefits David finds in light of the promise of eternal life (v. 10)? Which of these resonates most with you-counsel,