



Before the Lesson

Read the Scriptures and overview below before your LIFE Group meets this week.

Scriptures: Acts 2:22-40, Isaiah 53:4-6, and John 20:1-10

Empty. It's generally not a word of positive connotation or favorable outcome. For most, it is never even something you desire to see, experience, or imagine. Very early this morning as I poured my coffee, I experienced emptiness. It came from the realization that my favorite coffee creamer was empty. Irritation, dread, and desperation set in. What would I do? How would I survive the morning? There was ... no hope ... for good coffee, that is.

But what about the emptiness found in a home where there is the absence of a father or mother, or the absence of money when the pantry is ... empty? What about the emptiness of a broken heart from the death of one you loved so much, or the emptiness of a mother's womb after a miscarriage? Words cannot convey that kind of emptiness. What is empty in you or your life? Is there an absence of energy, excitement, joy, hope, or confidence, but a plethora of weariness, loss, insecurity, grief, hopelessness, or pain?

As Mary Magdalene walked to the tomb of Jesus on the first Easter morning, she was in the throes of pain, loss, grief, and desperation. The emptiness she felt from the absence of Jesus after His death was almost more than she could bear. Still replaying the horrific events of the cross in her mind as she walked along the path, the heaviness of her grief was so intense that when she came to the entrance of the tomb and found it – empty – she did not realize that what had once been terrifying loss was now the very “empty” that would fill her soul for eternity. *Empty* had become the new reality of her life, but now *empty* caused her life to be filled with hope, joy, peace, and the unending presence of her Savior, Jesus. This, all because the tomb was ... *empty*!

How did the empty tomb affect Mary and the disciples? How does it affect you?

Group Discussion

In his Easter message, Pastor McKinley used the word **EMPTY** to help guide us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We looked at the **E**vents surrounding Jesus' death, the **M**eaning behind His death, the **P**rophecies that foreshadowed His resurrection, the **T**estimonies of the power of Jesus to transform lives, and the **Y**ielding that must be the response to the empty tomb.

Events and Prophecies

- What were some of the events, controversies, and prophecies surrounding Jesus' life and death? (Acts 2:22, 25-35)
- How does Scripture solidify and provide testimony to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? (As you discuss this, feel free to look not only at the verses quoted in Acts 2:25-35, but also at any other Old Testament passages that point to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, e.g., Zechariah 9:9, Psalm 41:9 with Matthew 26:21-26, Zechariah 11:12-13.)

- What do you know to be true about the character and person of Jesus Christ based on your own personal knowledge and the Scriptures?
- Why do you think people in Jesus' day and many today have difficulty believing in and accepting Him as Messiah?

The Meaning of the cross

- Why did Jesus have to die for mankind? (Read Isaiah 53 aloud.)
- Acts 2:23-24 says that Jesus was "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God," declaring that Jesus' death was planned before the foundation of the world. Was Jesus' death voluntary or involuntary? (See John 10:17-18.) What does this passage tell you about Jesus? (Colossians 1:15-20)
- In Jesus' day the cross was a horrific and terrifying means of execution, but because the tomb was empty on Easter morning, for us the cross is a glorious passageway to eternal life. What does the cross mean to you? What difference has the cross made in your life?

The Testimonies of Jesus' power and Yielding to Jesus to experience that power

- In Acts 2:32, 36 Peter was in essence saying, "The testimony of the cross is not a myth; it is a fact. So in light of that testimony, what are you going to do about it? What difference will you let Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection make in your life, personally?"

The testimony of Jesus causes us to answer these same questions. What is your response? What difference will you allow the work of Jesus to make in your life – first for salvation, and then for a Spirit-filled life on earth?

- Read Acts 2:37. Where in your life are you "cut to the heart?" Where are the empty places, the hopeless spots, the painful memories, and the difficult places that wound your heart? What will you do?
- Peter's response was, "Repent and be baptized." Have you yielded to the Spirit of God and come to a point of repentance for salvation?

If you are already saved, is there something else from which you need to repent?

- What do you need to yield to (let go of) so you can "yield to" (bow down to, surrender to, agree with) Jesus and live an abundant life? (John 10:10)

Further Study

Read Hebrews 12 this week, then think and pray through your responses to these questions.

- In my daily struggles (sin, the flesh, burdens, emptiness, pain, etc.), who do I need to look to?
- What can I do to keep my focus on Jesus in the midst of these struggles?
- What can I do to "see to it that no root of bitterness springs up in me" from Hebrews 12:15?
- Hebrews 12:27-29 speaks of things that are "shakable and unshakable." Am I trusting in or depending on that which is shakable (earthly things, man, self) or unshakable (faith and belief in God through His unshakable Son, Jesus)?