



Because of Easter | Shawn Johnson | 04.20.2025

Weekly Study

SHARE

As group members get settled, take a few minutes to check in with everyone and see how life is going. Share an exciting story from this week, your highs and lows, an answered prayer, or something you're struggling with. If someone is really struggling, rally the group around them and take a few moments to pray over them.

- **Share a high, a low, and something interesting from this week.**
- **How has the Holy Week series given you a deeper understanding and appreciation for the work of the cross and the love Jesus has for you?**

GROW

Happy Easter, everyone!

For over two thousand years, we've celebrated the resurrection of Jesus—a moment that changed history and continues to transform lives. But on that very first Easter, it didn't feel like a celebration. For Jesus' followers, it was a day marked by deep sorrow, confusion, and shattered expectations. They didn't know the full story yet. All they knew was that their hope had been nailed to a cross and buried in a tomb.

Then, Jesus showed up. Alive. Victorious. Faithful.

In the middle of their grief, He brought peace. In the midst of their doubt, He brought clarity. And where hope had died, He raised new things to life.

Because of Easter:

- 1. He still shows up.**
- 2. We still remember.**
- 3. There is still purpose in our pain.**

As we reflect on the days following Jesus' death, we see the promises He made come to life. He was who He said He was, and He did what He said He would do. That means we can trust Him now, especially in the hard moments.

So today, we hold on to hope. Not because life is easy, but because Jesus is alive and still with us.

- **Shawn mentioned that the first Easter was messy and confusing for Jesus' followers. How does this perspective change your view of Easter? How might it relate to struggles in your own faith journey?**

Read John 20:14-15

When we already know how the story ends, it's easy to rush past the quiet, beautiful moments in Scripture—moments where Jesus reveals just how deeply He loves us.

Take Mary's encounter with the risen Jesus outside the empty tomb. Before she realizes who He is, Jesus asks her, "Woman, why are you crying?" At first glance, this question can feel confusing. After all, Jesus is God, all-knowing and ever-present, so why would He ask a question He already knows the answer to? We often make two quick assumptions: either Jesus is being rhetorical, subtly questioning Mary's faith, or we get stuck wondering why an all-knowing God would ask anything at all. But if we slow down and listen closely, we see something far more personal unfolding.

Charles Spurgeon captures it beautifully: “He [Jesus] did not at once begin by saying, ‘I know why you are sad.’ No, He waited for Mary to speak, and in His patience drew forth from her the items and particulars of her troubles.”

In that moment, Jesus wasn’t testing her—He was loving her. Gently. Patiently. He sat with her in the midst of her grief, giving her space to speak as she poured out her heart. And by doing so, He showed us something profound:

We have a God who doesn’t just fix our pain—He sits with us in it. He listens. He draws near. He lets our swelling hearts speak, not to a distant God, but to a Savior who couldn’t be closer. In this beautiful moment, we see that **He still shows up**.

- **Pastor Shawn emphasized that Jesus "still shows up" in our lives today. Can you share a time when you felt Jesus show up unexpectedly in your life?**
- **Is it possible that Jesus might want to help you process your pain before He heals, restores, and renews what’s been broken? Why do you think He works that way? Take a moment to reflect and explain.**

Read Luke 24:6-8

When we already know how the story ends, it’s easy to miss the quiet, holy tension in moments like this—when the truth of Jesus’ resurrection is just starting to break through.

Picture the women at the tomb. They came expecting to mourn. Their hearts were heavy, their minds swirling with confusion, sorrow, and loss. But instead of a sealed grave, they found an empty tomb and an angelic reminder: “He is not here. He has risen.”

At first, this might seem like a gentle rebuke—“Don’t you remember what He said?” But this moment is not about shame. It’s about restoration. They aren’t being scolded for forgetting—They’re being invited to remember. To reconnect the dots between what Jesus said and what just happened. And when they remembered His words, hope came rushing back in.

It’s a powerful picture of grace. In this moment, it’s as if Jesus is saying:

“I know this is confusing. I know it didn’t turn out the way you expected. But it unfolded exactly the way I planned. I am who I said I am, and I’ve done what I promised I would do. You can trust my heart—even when life doesn’t make sense. My love for you will never fail. And when doubt creeps in, when you wonder if I’m still with you—just look back. **Remember** every time I’ve been faithful before.”

- **How has God shown His faithfulness to you in the past? How does remembering those moments give you hope and strengthen your faith for what you're facing now, and for what's ahead?**

Read John 20:16-20

When we already know how the story ends, we can miss the sacred weight of the in-between—those moments when grief turns to joy, when fear gives way to peace, and when Jesus makes Himself known in deeply personal ways as he turns our pain into purpose.

After Mary’s tears and confusion, Jesus says just one word:

“Mary.”

And everything changes.

He calls her by name—and in an instant, she recognizes Him. Her sorrow turns to joy, her confusion to clarity. This wasn’t a distant, dramatic reveal. It was personal. Gentle. Intimate. The kind of moment only love could create.

Later, Jesus appears to His disciples. They were locked behind doors, gripped by fear. And what are the first words out of His mouth?

“Peace be with you.”

He doesn’t scold them for running. He doesn’t rebuke their fear. He speaks peace, shows them His scars, and gives them joy.

In both moments, we see the same heart: A Savior who meets us where we are—whether we’re weeping at a tomb or hiding behind locked doors. A Savior who calls us by name.

He reveals His scars, not to shame us, but to show us that His pain had a purpose, and ours does too.

If you're anything like Mary—stuck in a moment of fear, confusion, or grief—take heart. Jesus still shows up. He calls you by name. He breathes life into the places you thought were beyond healing. And He doesn't just leave you there. He gives your pain a purpose. He turns your struggle into strength, your wounds into wisdom, and your story into a testimony that can unlock freedom for someone else.

Nothing is wasted in His hands. Not even the hardest parts. **There is still purpose in our pain.**

- **How have you seen God use painful experiences in your life or others' lives for a greater purpose?**

M O V E

Read Luke 24:5

As we come to the end of this study, this question lingers with weight and wonder. The angels asked it of the women at the tomb, but it echoes into our own lives, too.

“Why are you searching for life in places that can only offer death?”

It's a question that gently confronts us.

How often do we, like Mary and the others, go looking for hope in the wrong places—old patterns, empty promises, dead-end pursuits—when the risen Jesus is already near, offering something so much greater?

Sometimes we return to what's familiar, even if it's broken. We cling to control, approval, performance, or comfort, hoping it will fill the ache in our soul. But those things were never meant to give us life. They can't. And yet, Jesus doesn't shame us for searching—He simply meets us, calls us by name, and redirects our hearts.

These final questions become a gentle invitation to reflect:

- **Where am I still looking for life among things that cannot give it?**
- **What am I holding onto that Jesus is asking me to release?**
- **Where might He be calling me to step into resurrection life—not just in eternity, but here and now?**

P R A Y

Thank You for the hope and healing we find in Your presence. As we remember the empty tomb, we are reminded that even in our darkest moments, You are near, offering peace to our hearts.

Thank You for meeting us where we are, patiently listening to our pain, and calling us by name. Help us to trust in Your unending faithfulness and see that our pain has purpose as it leads us to rely more deeply on You and testify to Your redemptive love.

As we embrace the abundant life that comes through Your resurrection, renew our minds, restore our spirits, and fill every part of our lives with the joy of Easter.

Amen