

Grace Knows Your Name

South Jersey Small Group Guide

Warm-Up Questions

1. Have you ever shown up to something — an event, a gathering, a holiday — and felt completely disconnected from the energy in the room? What was that like?
2. Think of a time you showed up somewhere you didn't really want to be and something unexpected happened. What was it?

Key Passage: Mark 16:1-8

Recap

The resurrection story in Mark 16 doesn't begin with triumph — it begins with grief. Three women walk toward a tomb before sunrise, carrying burial spices, asking each other who is going to move a stone they have no way of moving on their own. They weren't full of faith. They were full of grief. They showed up because they loved Jesus and didn't know what else to do. And yet that ordinary, exhausted act of showing up is exactly where the resurrection met them. The stone was already moved. The message was already waiting. Grace showed up where nobody expected it.

The same grace that met the women at the tomb went looking for Peter — the disciple who had denied Jesus three times and removed himself from the group out of shame. The angel's message didn't say "tell the disciples" and leave it at that. It said "including Peter." His name. Specifically. Because grace doesn't deal in categories — it deals in names. And the resurrection's first personal message went to the man who had failed most publicly, not to condemn him but to restore him. That's the pattern of Easter. It doesn't wait for you to be ready. It finds you in the ordinary, in the broken, in the unresolved — and it goes ahead of you to prepare the way.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. The women showed up to the tomb out of love and obligation — not out of spiritual certainty. Is there an area of your life right now where you're showing up out of faithfulness even though you don't feel it? What does that look like for you?
2. The sermon talked about the difference between grief that looks the way it's supposed to and grief that doesn't fit the normal shape. Have you ever carried a kind of grief or pain that was hard to explain to others? What made it difficult to talk about?
3. The women were so focused on the problem of the stone that they hadn't considered the possibility it might already be handled. Is there a situation in your life where you've been so focused on the obstacle that you might have missed what God has already done?

4. The sermon drew a distinction between guilt and shame — guilt says I made a mistake, shame says I am a mistake. Which one do you tend to struggle with more? How has that shown up in your relationship with God or with others?
5. Peter dismissed himself from the community — nobody kicked him out. He just stopped showing up. Have you ever pulled back from church, community, or God not because you were told to leave but because shame convinced you that you didn't belong? What did that season feel like?
6. The angel singled Peter out by name in the message. What does it mean to you personally that grace deals in names rather than categories? Is there a part of you that still struggles to believe that applies to your specific situation?
7. The risen Jesus went to Galilee — the ordinary, working class, everyday place — rather than the temple or the center of religious life. Where in your ordinary, everyday life do you most need to be reminded that Jesus is already there ahead of you?
8. The sermon ended with the observation that Jesus hadn't encountered the women or Peter yet — He had already been preparing the way before the reunion happened. Is there an area of your life where you don't yet feel like you've encountered Jesus but you're being invited to consider that He may already be at work?

Pray