

cell outlines
APRIL 2020

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JOURNEY TO THE CROSS WITH MARY MAGDALENE

EASTER ICEBREAKER GAMES

Choose from any of the following Easter icebreaker games to start your cell groups. Use hard-boiled, raw or chocolate eggs depending on how much mess you can deal with!

Egg Tower

Split the group into two teams. Give each team some newspapers, a roll of Sellotape and an egg. Ask each team to build as tall a tower as possible that will support the egg within a given amount of time.

Egg Throw

Couples stand one pace apart and toss an egg to each other. They step back one pace each toss. The winning couple is the one which is the furthest apart and keeps their egg intact.

Easter Egg Nose Rally

Eggs must be rolled around a course, only using the nose.

Hidden Eggs

Put ten small chocolate eggs in a bowl of cream or flour. The players must fish the eggs out as quickly as possible, using only their mouths. They may eat what they find!

The Egg Case

Give group an egg and some newspaper sheets. The task is to pack the egg in newspaper so that the egg survives being thrown out of the first or second floor of a building.

Guess the Eggs

Fill one jar or an assortment of jars with a number of chocolate or sweet eggs. Ask each person to guess the correct number of the eggs in the jar. The person with the closest number will get the jar as the prize.

Chocolate Egg Bowling

Roll a ball across the room. Each person tries to roll their eggs to get closest to the ball.

Easter Egg Blow

Use real hollow egg shells. Each person has a straw and an egg. Use the straw to blow the eggs across the room. First person across is the winner.

THE EASTER STORY

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.

John 3:16-17 MSG

Aim: To give an overview of the Easter story and reflect on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus

Use this session to revisit the detail of the stories of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. For some of your group members this may be familiar ground, but for others they may not have read the biblical text of these great events before.

WELCOME

Choose from any of the Easter icebreaker games.

WORD

1. Read the biblical account of Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection (Mark 14:32-16:20 or Luke 22:39-24:53). (Please note that these passages may seem very long. You may wish to select only some sections and summarise the rest.)

Use any of the following ideas to unpack these events in more detail.

- a. Read the story from a children's Bible story book and reflect on the illustrations.
- b. Choose a film clip that portrays the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. There are plenty on YouTube, but you will need to choose appropriately for the ages of your group.

The Miracle Maker (2000) is an animated adaptation of the later life of Jesus told through the eyes of a young girl, approx 1½ hours long.

Here are a couple of clips:

The Miracle Maker (2000) – The crucifixion of Jesus

www.youtube.com/watch?v=88vj5A_oLRM

Resurrection and ascension clip (Miracle Maker)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zc2NtYSI7oE

- c. Design a poster/timeline outlining the last week of Jesus' life.

This example is from One Year Daily Chronological Bible Studies.

chronologicalbiblestudies.com/tmlne_Nov3-10.htm

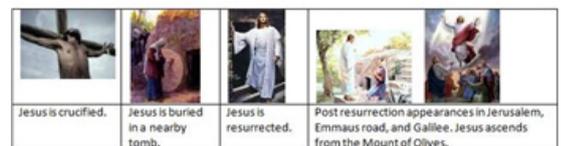
- d. Draw/write out profiles of each person mentioned in the Bible text.

Consider:

- * who they are
- * what was their role in the crucifixion of Jesus
- * what was their relationship with Jesus
- * how did they change through it

(If you do this activity, be sure to include Mary Magdalene as we will be reflecting on her story in the next three sessions.)

The last days of Christ on earth, spring 30 AD



SESSION
ONE

This video from the Skit Guys gives an interesting account of Good Friday from six individuals who were close to Jesus.

The Skit Guys – Good Friday (9 mins)

 www.youtube.com/watch?v=w39N3vHn1mQ&t=2s

e. This activity gets group members to create radio news reports on different aspects of the Easter story. Getting them to put the story in their own words is a good way to help them dig deeper into the story and engage with it.

Hand out these passages to small groups of young people.

- * The Last Supper – Mark 14:12-26
- * Jesus in Gethsemane – Mark 14:32-52
- * Peter disowns Jesus – Mark 14:27-31,66-72
- * Jesus before Pilate – Mark 15:1-20
- * The crucifixion and death of Jesus – Mark 15:21-41
- * The burial and resurrection of Jesus – Mark 15:42 to 16:20.

Get each group to prepare the script for a radio news report on their part of the story. They need to think about what is newsworthy and how they would get the story across. Get them to do an audio recording of their script (most smartphones will have this facility). Once all the stories are recorded, play them in sequence so they can hear the whole story.

(Adapted from Energize. www.energize.uk.net/meeting-plans/372)

WORSHIP

Easter Anthem: Who Do You Say I Am?

 www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4m11MOy7eQ

Have a large stone (small boulder) placed in the centre of the group.

Watch the video above in an attitude of prayer and reflection (you could watch it more than once). Play some reflective music or a worship track (try 'Passion' by Hillsong Young & Free – NB the YouTube video contains flashing images) and give each group member a marker pen. Ask each person to write a word or phrase on the boulder that symbolises their prayer of thanks or wonder at all that Jesus has done for us.

Ask group members to pray their prayers aloud or pray together in pairs.

WITNESS/ACTION

Type the word 'Easter' into an internet image search and see how far you have to scroll before you find an image of the real Easter story in amongst the bunnies, eggs, chocolates and spring flowers.

Challenge the group: This week set up something in your house/bedroom to remind you what Easter is really all about.

MARY MAGDALENE: BELONGING

“ ‘No one ever loved Jesus so much as Mary Magdalene. He had done something for her that no one else could ever do, and she could never forget.’

Tom Wright

Overview: Through the cross of Jesus we have an invitation to belong, to be part of God’s family. When we consider all that Jesus has done for us, how can we hold anything back? This Easter, let’s consider how devoted we to are Jesus, to the one who gave up everything for us, so that we could be free.

Introduction: When we read about Mary Magdalene in the Bible, we immediately see what a devoted and loyal follower of Jesus she was, from the moment he healed her of the seven demons that were taking over her life. Mary was with the group of women who travelled with Jesus and she cared for Jesus’ needs out of her own money. Mary is mentioned by name in all four Gospels in the accounts of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. Her devotion and loyalty are unquestionable as she stays watching Jesus dying on the cross and then carries on watching to see where his body will be put. Her commitment to Jesus continued even after his death, as, in her grief, she hurried to Jesus’ tomb to prepare his body for a proper burial. So, she and her friends had the privilege of being the first to witness that Jesus had risen from the dead. More than that, Mary Magdalene also had the special privilege of talking to the risen Jesus face to face and she was entrusted not only in being a witness to his resurrection but also as a messenger to tell others the good news.¹

WELCOME

1. Choose from any of the Easter icebreaker games.
2. What/who are you devoted to?

Create an imaginary line across the centre of the room. One end of the line is number 1, the other end is number 10. Ask young people, ‘In your life, what are you devoted to?’

(If you need to explain what ‘devoted’ means, you could say: What takes up most of your time, your money, your thoughts? What do you long to be good at, who do you always want to be with, what do you not want to miss out on? What are you putting a lot of energy into achieving, being, doing?)

Ask: how devoted are you to:

- * Gaming?
- * School work?
- * Playing sport?
- * A specific sports team (eg Arsenal!)?
- * A group of friends?
- * A celebrity?
- * A TV programme?
- * Exams?
- * Becoming a particular kind of person?
- * Achieving a specific career?
- * A boy/girl friend?
- * Reading the Bible?
- * Following Jesus?
- * Prayer?
- * (add any of your own)

As you read out each one, ask group members to place themselves along your imaginary line according to the scale of their ‘devotion’ (1 = not at all, 10 = completely devoted).

Discuss as appropriate.

You could also ask, ‘Is there anything in your life for which you would give yourself a devotion rating of 10?’

¹Adapted from Energize

WORD

1. Introduction to Mary Magdalene.

Ask the group what they know about Mary Magdalene.

Explain that whilst there is not a lot written about Mary Magdalene in the Bible, the little that there is tells us that she was a devoted and loyal follower of Jesus.

Explain that in the next three sessions we are going to look at what we can learn from her life.

Split into pairs / small groups and give each group one of the following Scriptures to read:

 Luke 8:1-3

 Mark 15:37-47

 John 20:1-9

 John 20:10-18

Gather back together and ask each pair/group to feed back on what they have read. On a large piece of flipchart paper jot down some notes about Mary's life and her involvement with Jesus. Consider what things she did and said, who she was with, any emotions she displayed. You could even draw out a storyboard. Try to get as much down on the paper as possible about Mary's story and character; this will help in the following sessions.

You could also watch this short video:

Mary Magdalene's Story

 www.youtube.com/watch?v=4apP-afqtsc

2. Belonging: how does Mary follow Jesus?

a. Give each person some Post-it Notes and ask them to jot down examples of Mary's devotion and loyalty to Jesus. Encourage them to look back at the Scriptures and the notes that you have made. Put the Post-it Notes on to the profile of Mary Magdalene that you created on the flipchart paper (above) and discuss as appropriate.

Some examples:

- * She left her home and her family and travelled with him
- * She supported him in his ministry
- * She played her part quietly in the background
- * She supported the other followers of Jesus
- * She gave of her own money
- * She remained as close as possible throughout the crucifixion
- * She supported Jesus to the bitter end
- * She did not leave him as he hung dying and she stayed watching to see where his body would be put
- * She went out as early as she could to tend to his body
- * She recognised his voice

WITNESS/ACTION

Display the following verse so that everyone can see it and read it together.

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

Mark 12:30 NIV

Assuming that group members have smartphones, ask each person to do an internet image search for Mark 12:30. Ask them to scroll through the images and pick one to download or screenshot.

SESSION
TWO

When they have done this, ask them to set this as their home screen or lock screen (or even their profile picture) for the coming week as a reminder of Mary Magdalene and how devoted she was to Jesus, and to help us remember always to give Jesus the best of ourselves.

(If you don't think that group members will have smartphones, come prepared with some images of the Scripture already printed out that they can choose from.)

Challenge the group to do one practical thing this week as an example of their devotion to Jesus and/or to finding God in their lives this Easter.

WORSHIP

Write a prayer together using the letters of the word 'devotion' to start each sentence.

Thank Jesus for his invitation to be part of God's family.

The following worship song speaks of our desire to be devoted to Jesus.

'Just Jesus' – Hillsong Young and Free

MARY MAGDALENE: IDENTITY

“ In that message of Mary, there is the very essence of Christianity, for a Christian is essentially one who can say: ‘I have seen the Lord.’ Christianity does not mean knowing about Jesus; it means knowing him. It does not mean arguing about him; it means meeting him. It means certainty of experience that Jesus is alive.

Tom Wright

Overview: Through the cross of Jesus we have a new identity, our old selves were ‘put to death’ on the cross with Jesus (Romans 6), we have each become a brand-new person, living in freedom and light! Like Mary, we have been changed from the inside out. But how do we show this to those around us? How do they know our true identity as followers of Jesus? How do we demonstrate the tangible life-transforming power of the cross at work in our lives?

Introduction: In every glimpse we have of Mary she is acting out of appreciation for the freedom that Jesus has given her. She worked alongside Jesus in his ministry so that others could have the same opportunities for healing and transformation. Her faith and trust in Jesus gave her courage to stand under the cross of Jesus when many other disciples were hiding in fear, possibly risking her life. Jesus’ resurrection gave Mary Magdalene increased boldness and dedication to him. She is among the brave followers of Christ who stuck with him through thick and thin and her whole life demonstrated her transformation and commitment to him.

WELCOME

1. Choose from any of the Easter icebreaker games.
2. Have each person write down, in secret, three little known but true facts about themselves. Collect in all the pieces of paper and shuffle them about. In turn, read out each set of three statements and ask group members to try to guess the identity of the person who wrote it.

Or – have each person draw, in secret, a funny self-portrait. Display all the self-portraits and ask group members to guess the identity of picture.

WORD

1. New Life Easter Egg Hunt

For this activity you will need to obtain some coloured plastic eggs that split in half. Inside each egg place a small strip of paper or card with one of the following verses on. Hide the eggs before the session starts.

Have an Easter egg hunt and ask group members to find the eggs. When all the eggs have been found, gather the group back together and ask each person to see what is inside.

Go around the group and each read aloud the Bible verse that is inside. Ask the group what is the common theme in all these Scriptures.

When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun!

2 Corinthians 5:17 TLB

Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life – no longer at sin’s every beck and call! What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ’s sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection.

Romans 6:6-8 MSG

You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did.

Romans 6:11 MSG

Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life – even though invisible to spectators – is with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:3 MSG

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

So, get rid of your old self, which made you live as you used to – the old self that was being destroyed by its deceitful desires. Your hearts and minds must be made completely new, and you must put on the new self, which is created in God's likeness and reveals itself in the true life that is upright and holy.

Ephesians 4:22-24 GNT

Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is so good, and by raising Jesus from death, he has given us new life and a hope that lives on.

1 Peter 1:3 CEV

Explain: We read in the Bible that Mary was totally changed by Jesus, being set free from her old life and changed into a totally different person.

The Bible tells us that the same is true for us when we come to Jesus. Through his death and resurrection, we have a new identity. We can be set free from the past and become someone brand new, a whole new fresh start. That's the real story of Easter!

For further discussion:

- 🗨️ What are some changes you might expect to see in the life of someone who becomes a follower of Jesus – changes on the outside and on the inside?
- 🗨️ How has your relationship with Jesus changed you?
- 🗨️ Is there anything that you need to be 'set free' from, as Mary was, so you can give all of yourself back to Jesus?
- 🗨️ For an older group: What changes had to take place in Mary Magdalene for her to move from a person inhabited by seven demons to the person who followed Jesus all the way to his death?

2. Identity: How does the way that Mary lives show that she is a disciple of Jesus?

a. Look again at your posters about Mary Magdalene from the last session and briefly recap Mary's story.

Pick out any of the Post-it Notes on your poster that have written on them something that would have made it obvious to those around Mary that she was a follower of Jesus.

Pose the question to the group: What in your life makes it obvious to others that you are a follower of Jesus?

b. Hand out copies of Colossians 3 (handout below) to each person, along with some coloured highlighters. (For a younger group you may want to shorten the passage.)

Ask them to read through this Scripture in pairs, and to highlight any words, phrases or sentences that describe our new identity in Jesus and how we should live. Highlight any words in this chapter that show how we live our lives as devoted followers of Jesus.

Gather the group back together and ask the pairs to share what they have highlighted and why.

You could ask group members to cut out words or phrases that stand out to them and put them inside their plastic eggs.

WITNESS/ACTION

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:17 NIV

'Do it all in the name of Jesus' means bringing honour to him in every aspect and activity of daily living. Just as Mary wasn't afraid to show others that she was follower of Jesus, even throughout the dangerous time of his crucifixion, how can we demonstrate to others that we are followers of Jesus and the difference he has made in our lives?

Ask group members to commit to making one change / doing one thing this Easter that will clearly show others their identity as a follower of Jesus. They could write what they decide to do on their plastic Easter egg with a permanent marker pen.

WORSHIP

Print out a large picture of Jesus on the cross or draw out a large outline of a cross. Pass around some marker pens and ask group member to write on the picture their ideas, thoughts and feelings about what the cross means for them. Turn some of these thoughts into one-sentence prayers of thanks and praise.

Listen to 'Story of the Cross' by Rend Co Kids to finish your time together.

Colossians 3:3-17 MSG

So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ – that's where the action is. See things from his perspective.

³⁻⁴ Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life – even though invisible to spectators – is with Christ in God. He is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up again on this earth, you'll show up, too – the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity, like Christ.

⁵⁻⁸ And that means killing off everything connected with that way of death: sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy. That's a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God. It's because of this kind of thing that God is about to explode in anger. It wasn't long ago that you were doing all that stuff and not knowing any better. But you know better now, so make sure it's all gone for good: bad temper, irritability, meanness, profanity, dirty talk.

⁹⁻¹¹ Don't lie to one another. You're done with that old life. It's like a filthy set of ill-fitting clothes you've stripped off and put in the fire. Now you're dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it. All the old fashions are now obsolete. Words like Jewish and non-Jewish, religious and irreligious, insider and outsider, uncivilised and uncouth, slave and free, mean nothing. From now on everyone is defined by Christ, everyone is included in Christ.

¹²⁻¹⁴ So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offence. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ – the Message – have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives – words, actions, whatever – be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.

MARY MAGDALENE: PURPOSE

“ Like those first disciples, when we became Christians, we were not only saved from sin, but called to a cause. And like them, we were not chosen because of our spiritual credentials or transferable skills, but because God was going to bring transformation both in us and through us.

Krish Kandiah

Overview: Just as Mary Magdalene was trusted to tell others about her experience of meeting with the risen Jesus, so all of us who are Christians are also trusted to tell others about Jesus. Mary Magdalene was intentional in her service because Christ had done so much for her. How can we serve others in light of what Christ has done for us?

Introduction: Mary was the first one to see Jesus after his resurrection. Jesus could have appeared to any one of the disciples, yet he chose Mary. She was the first person to carry the gospel to the rest of the disciples to tell them the good news. She is often known as the ‘apostle to the apostles’ or the ‘first apostle’. It didn’t matter that she was ‘only a woman’, it didn’t matter that she had a past. It was now her responsibility to tell others about Jesus, the Son of God, now raised from the dead. Mary was faithful to her call to be a witness and tell others what she had seen and heard – that Jesus had risen. She didn’t worry about what other people would think of her for believing something so extraordinary. Mary was called, changed into a new creation and had a purpose in the greatest moment of history. Like Mary we are called to be witnesses of Jesus’ amazing power in our own lives and of his love for others.

WELCOME

1. Choose from any of the Easter icebreaker games.
2. Find a few unusual objects from around your home, things that your group members will not be familiar with (if you don’t have any, look on the internet and print out some pictures of some bizarre objects). Ask your group members if they can guess what each of the objects are and what their purpose is.

WORD

1. Read Luke 4:18–21 together.

Ask the group if they can think of / look up any other Scriptures that they feel point to Jesus’ purpose/mission on earth. For example: Matthew 20:28; Luke 19:10; John 3:16-17; John 6:38-40; John 10:10b; John 12:46; Matthew 9:13.

Read the Scriptures and then brainstorm on to flipchart paper what you feel Jesus’ purpose and mission was when he came to earth, and what it is now.

A fun thing to do would be to put all your Scriptures (or key words from them) into a word cloud generator and see what resulting graphic it comes up with. You could print/email a copy for everyone. There are lots of apps that do this; try ABCya!

Looking at all these Scriptures/words, write a mission statement for Jesus.

Discuss: how can we be part of Jesus’ mission here on earth?

2. Read John 20:10–18 again.

Jesus gave Mary an important job to do.

Ask the group if they can spot this in the text.

Discuss:

- 🗨️ What did Jesus say to Mary (verse 17)?
- 🗨️ What message did he entrust her to spread?



SESSION
FOUR

Read on to verse 23 and see what happened next. What commission did Jesus give to his disciples (verses 21–23)?

Mary Magdalene was a normal person just like you and me, yet Jesus used her to spread the gospel and serve other believers. Just as Mary Magdalene was trusted to tell others about her experience of meeting with the risen Jesus, so all of us who are Christians are also trusted to tell others about Jesus. Mary was to tell others about how she met Jesus in the garden, by the empty tomb. We can tell others about how we have met with Jesus – for example, how he has answered our prayers. Not everyone will believe us, but no one can take away our experiences that we know to be true.

Discuss in pairs: What message has Jesus continued to entrust you to share? Practise sharing the simple gospel message – the real story of Easter – as you would share it with someone who doesn't know Jesus. How would you explain to them about how you have met with Jesus?

WITNESS/ACTION

Purpose: How does Mary's life impact others?

1. Mary Magdalene was intentional in her service because Jesus had done so much for her. Her knowledge of Jesus' love for her flowed over into love for others. How can we serve others in the light of what Jesus has done for us?

Challenge group members to think of one practical action they could do this week to serve someone else.

Discuss: As a group, is there a practical response you could make in your community, in the light of all you have considered this month? How could you practically demonstrate the real message of Easter? How could you show your community what Jesus means to you, how he has changed your life, and how he loves them so much that he was willing to be crucified for their freedom?

2. Get group members to make crosses out of blotting paper (you could use kitchen towel but this is harder to write on). Make the crosses several layers thick.

Now ask group members to write on the paper ways that they can serve others; how they can impact the lives of other people with the love of Jesus and bring the hope and light of the resurrection into lives of those around them who may have little hope or light.

Place the crosses on a tray and dampen with a small amount of water. Sprinkle on some cress seeds. Each day, when they water the seeds and the shoots grow, this can remind them of the commitment they have made to serve others.

(Adapted from Energize www.energize.uk.net/meeting-plans/849)

WORSHIP

Jesus was someone whose life purpose was to love people, quite literally, to death. Spend some time asking Jesus how he feels about your friends, community and nation. Share with each other the words or pictures that Jesus gives you.

Pray together that you could also be someone who loves others as Jesus did/does.

Use the track 'Resurrection Day' by Rend Collective to finish this month, thanking Jesus for all he has done for us on the cross, and committing our lives to his service for ever!