

**Icebreaker:**

How did you celebrate Easter when you were growing up? Or when your children were young?

**Read and discuss: Matthew 28:1-20**

1. What attitude do you think people around you (family, neighbors, co-workers) have about the resurrection? What is your attitude about the resurrection of Christ?
2. In Matthew 28:8 it says the women “hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy.” Have you ever felt both these emotions together? When was that and why did you feel both?
3. When the disciples saw the resurrected Jesus, “they worshiped him, but some doubted.” (Matthew 28:17) Sometimes, our doubts lead to more faith as we wrestle with God and our own doubts. Have you ever worshiped and doubted as some of the disciples did?
4. As a group, read aloud and then reflect on this quote from theologian N.T. Wright:
 

“A mission-shaped church must have its mission shaped by hope: that the genuine Christian hope, rooted in Jesus’ resurrection, is the hope for God’s renewal of all things, for his overcoming of corruption, decay, and death, for his filling of the whole cosmos with his love and grace, his power and glory.”

What do you find that is hopeful in this statement? How has the Church helped you to experience hope?
5. Share some things in life that steal your hope or where your hope has been diminished.
6. Take a minute and think of an area in the world, our country, your family that is facing hardship, difficulty, or persecution. Reflect together on where God’s hope is in those situations.
7. Hope is not something you can make yourself feel with simple willpower. Therefore, what actions steps can you take to develop a greater sense of hope?

**Prayer:**

Share your prayer requests with one another and also remember those from our church family:

- > Prayers of healing for Kim Cochrane and Lois Smock.
- > Prayers of comfort for Mary and Eric Evenson and family in the death of Mary’s mother and for Brian and Cynthia McCall and family in the death of Brian’s sister, Nita.

**Leader’s Notes:**

He is Risen! He is Risen indeed! While hunting for Easter eggs, eating chocolate bunnies, or sharing a great ham and mashed potatoes dinner with family – we also celebrated the resurrection of Jesus this past Sunday. Because we believe that Jesus rose from the dead, we too can defeat death someday – and share eternal life with God. That’s great news! But like the women at the empty tomb and the disciples who saw Jesus, we can still have fear and doubts. How can the resurrection story help us to have hope – and overcome even our own fear and doubts? How can we take the faith and the hope that God gives us and share that hope that will renew decay, overcome death, and fill the world with love and grace?

**{Question 1}** This is an opening question to get your group to share their thoughts and feelings about the resurrection. It is meant to get people talking and sharing – not to have to discuss deep theology just yet.

**{Question 2}** Matthew describes Jesus’ appearance as “like lightning.” The guards were so afraid they became like dead men. When faced with a shocking new truth, we can have fear. But God does not want us to be afraid. We are called to have joy and excitement at what Jesus is doing even in our own lives, even when it is new and strange and maybe even shocking. It is also good to know that Jesus’ followers were like us – and could experience emotions like joy and fear together.

**{Question 3}** Jesus’ closest followers, his disciples, worshiped the risen Christ, but some doubted. Matthew was brave to include this truth. It paints a realistic, human picture of the disciples. It can inspire us as we sometimes have doubts. If we wrestle with our doubts about why God would do something or not do something, our faith can increase. Through doubt and struggle, God can draw us closer to himself, and we can see his reality even more.

**{Question 4}** Our hope is rooted in the resurrection. If we truly believe Jesus rose, then we can be confident that Jesus will accomplish all that he promised. Jesus promised to make all things new. Despite poverty, brokenness, and pain – Jesus has overcome – and will overcome those things in our life as well. When things go wrong in our lives, which they will, we can have hope that in the end Jesus wins – and with him, we win too. God’s kingdom will overcome death and decay with love and power and grace.

**{Question 5}** Our hope can be stolen by the pain of this world – when a loved one has a long horrible illness, or dies. When we see tragedy in the news, or brokenness around us – broken family relationships, unemployment, depression, despair. We can also lose hope if we place our hope in the wrong things – such as family success, presidential elections, wealth, career, or other things. By acknowledging the times when we lose hope, we can turn again to the giver of hope, and trust that God will meet us where we are.

**{Question 6}** You might consider one national or international example where there is hardship, and think of one close to home – within family or friends. Then think together – almost as a brainstorming time – where can you see God’s hope in those situations. A recent example for Scott was a mission trip to Reynosa, Mexico where abject poverty and lack of employment can feel crushing. God brings hope one family at a time through a local ministry that provides houses, a medical clinic, child sponsorship for families who can’t afford school uniforms or supplies, and a local churches that tell and show the love of Jesus Christ.

**{Question 7}** Some actions steps could be the basic Christian disciplines that we have discussed during our True North study. We can worship together, study scripture, pray, offer our time and spiritual gifts to others, share Biblical community, and practice humility. What are some other steps your group can offer?