



EASTER MATTERS

INTRODUCTION

If you think Jesus was a great leader and teacher, but find it hard to believe in his resurrection, you're in good company. Even his disciples were skeptical. But those same followers were the ones who would later become the spokesmen of a new movement: the church. They would maintain faith in the midst of incredible suffering. Many died still claiming that Jesus was their Savior. So what do we make of this defining event—the one that became the foundation of their faith . . . and of ours?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Talk about your memories of Easter as a child. What meaning was attached to Jesus' death for you then?
2. Read Luke 24:1-12. What was Jesus' closest followers' initial response to the empty tomb? Do you identify with the disciples' doubts about the resurrection? How does their subsequent belief affect the credibility of their testimonies?
3. Read 1 Peter 1:3-9. Have you experienced pain or suffering that make it difficult for you to have faith?
4. Do you know someone who has experienced pain or suffering but still has enduring faith? If you were to ask them how or why, how do you think they would respond?
5. What's the difference in having a faith that hinges on behavior, tradition, or the Bible, and a faith that hinges on the event of the resurrection?
6. Read the following statements. Underline and discuss the ones that hit closest to home for you today.

Forgiveness is available. You can be forgiven and have right standing with God.

You are free to forgive in return.

You can be free from the power of sin.

You don't have to fear death. You can spend eternity in heaven.

Suffering is not evidence of God's absence.

You are loved by God.

Your faith can depend on a historical event—the resurrection of Jesus.

God is for us because Jesus died for us, not because things always work out for us.

You have an inheritance that will never fade. You are God's child.

What might change if you freed yourself to believe that what you've underlined is true?

MOVING FORWARD

If you have lost faith in God because of the suffering in the world, your doubts about the Bible, or your behavior, maybe it's time to reconsider. We can't imagine the pain and suffering the disciples experienced, yet they believed. They saw the worst thing imaginable happen to the best person they had ever known and they believed anyway. Their faith was in the God introduced to them by Jesus—the God who invites us to call him Heavenly Father. The resurrection reframed their faith. It can reframe ours as well.

WEEKLY READING

This week, spend some time reading and reflecting on Mark 16:1-4 and 1 Peter 1:3-21.