

SMALL GROUPS

LIFE IS BETTER TOGETHER

EASTER Sunday: “Jesus Wants to Replace Our Fears and Doubts”

ICEBREAKER |

What is something that, as a child, you thought would be a bigger deal when you became an adult?

INTRODUCTION |

As kids, we have a lot of fears and doubts. When we become adults, those things change. No longer are we worried about tripping over something and getting our knees scraped. Instead, it's paychecks and bills, upset spouses or angry children. The fears and doubts that invade our lives are real. What have you been worrying about lately? Is it job worries? What's caused you some anxiety? Is it a relationship issue, parenting problems, health issues, financial fears? No matter what fears or doubts you face, in the risen Jesus of Easter we can replace them with His peace and our belief.

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Think back to that very first Easter. We come to church each year ready to celebrate. The weeks leading up to Easter are full of anticipation of something great. But on that first Easter, there were a lot of fears and doubts. Take a look!

That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. John 20:19 (NLT)

They had just seen their teacher and best friend killed and buried. Everything they thought they could rely upon was pulled out from underneath them. What were they going to do? How were they going to survive? Their first instinct was to lock the door and shut the world out. Can you relate?

But then Jesus shows up. Pay attention to what He has to say:

Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," He said. John 20:19 (NLT)

Notice He doesn't get on their case about being afraid. He doesn't call them cowards. Instead, He calms their fears.

Do you ever feel guilty for being worried? Do you ever feel bad about your fears? Why do you think we feel that way any time we get nervous about the future?

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Jesus shows up in our fears to bring us peace. He doesn't judge us for being afraid. He just wants to make us better. How does He do that? With His Spirit. Look:

Again He said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you." Then He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

John 20:21-22 (NLT)

It's not magic. It isn't a trick of the mind. It's the reality of the Holy Spirit in your life. When He comes alongside you, He does somethings to help you live a life free of fear. Read the following passage together:

The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Galatians 5:22-23

Pick one, two, or three of these fruits of the Spirit. Now, how can that feeling, attitude, or action help you overcome a fear in your life? (Example, joy lets me know that there is something good in any situation, patience reminds me that it's not over yet)

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Not only does Jesus show up in our fears, He is also there in our doubts. And He wants to replace them with our belief. Read the following part of the story:

One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in His hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in His side." Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. "Peace be with you," He said. Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at My hands. Put your hand into the wound in My side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!" John 20:24-27 (NLT)

Just like with our fears, Jesus didn't get upset when Thomas doubted what had happened. Isn't that great? He isn't mad at you when you have questions. He isn't afraid when you want to know an answer. Instead, He encourages you to keep searching.

Sometimes we think we have to know it all before we can believe in Jesus. But that's simply not true. Belief is a lifelong journey with plenty of questions along the way. What is something you thought you knew, about God or just about life, that later you realized you didn't fully understand?

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We get used to thinking that fears and doubts are something we need to conquer or control. If we allow them even an inch in our lives, they may take over our thoughts and take us out. The truth is, Jesus is not concerned about our fear and doubts.

Jesus is big enough for any fear or doubt you have.

No matter what you are going through, Jesus is ready to help you. When His closest friends ran and hid, He went and found them and encouraged them. When they were hungry, He gave them lunch. When they were lost, He sent His Spirit.

Whenever you face a fear or doubt, just remember that Jesus is bigger than what you are facing. He can and will help you out.

Why do you think we don't always first go to Jesus with our fears and doubts? What is it about trying to tackle them on our own that keeps us from asking Him for help?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Maybe you are facing some worries today or some big obstacles this week. Whenever you see them rising up on the horizon, just remember that Jesus rose from the grave long ago to help you with anything.

- Jesus wants to replace your fears with His peace.
- Jesus wants to replace your doubts with your belief.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You that You are ALIVE! We are eternally grateful for the gift of salvation and for taking care of all of our needs, no matter how big or small. On the day You rose again, You were kind and gracious enough to meet with Your friends behind closed doors. Even today, You meet us where we are and take care of us. Thank You for the peace that takes care of our fears. Thank You for giving us something to believe in that cancels out our doubts. Most of all we are grateful for loving us with no conditions. You accept us just as we are. We worship You and we praise You in Jesus' wonderful and powerful name we pray, amen!

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1: *"If you look for Me wholeheartedly, you will find Me. I will be found by you," says the Lord. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes."*
Jeremiah 29:13-14 (NLT)

Day 2: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting Him, He endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now He is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.*
Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT)

Day 3: *But now thus says the Lord, He who created you...He who formed you: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are Mine."*
Isaiah 43:1 (ESV)

Day 4: *The LORD is the One who will go before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you or abandon you. Do not be afraid or discouraged.*
Deuteronomy 31:8 (CSB)

Day 5: *Be merciful to those who doubt.*
Jude 1:22 (NIV)