

Growing Deeper
Burnt

Week One: Fighting Hopelessness
John 20:11-18

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Read John 20:1-11. As you read, jot down a list of things Mary discovered when she arrived at the tomb.
2. The evidence before Mary's eyes could not have been bleaker. No one in his right mind could reach a conclusion other than the one to which Mary came: someone had taken Jesus' body. Describe a time when you were faced with overwhelming evidence that a hoped-for result was not going to happen. How willing were you to assume the best in that situation?
3. What other feelings are invoked when you feel hopeless?
4. Look again at verse 2. What was the first thing Mary did when she realized Jesus' body was missing?
5. We see Mary doing something that many of us do in hopeless situations. What do you think Mary hoped would be the result of her action?
6. Perhaps Mary was looking for comfort from people who would feel the same way she did. Or maybe she wanted someone to tell her she was mistaken, that she would wake up from the nightmare she was facing. While we can't know what was in Mary's mind, we've all experienced the feeling of hopelessness at least once in our lifetime. What would you have said to Mary if she'd come to you? In other words, what would you say to someone who expressed feeling hopeless?
7. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, ask God to help you be the kind of person to whom others would feel safe turning if they were overwhelmed with hopelessness.

Spent FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Read John 20:11-13. Often when we feel hopeless, tears are inevitable. In Mary's case, do you think her tears were more tears of anger or sadness? Explain your response. (There's no right or wrong answer.)
9. Mary's tears may have simply been fueled by helplessness. Jesus was gone and there was nothing she could do about it. Think about a time in your life when you believed you had no options, at least none you liked. How did it feel to be in that situation?
10. Like Mary, our most frustrating moments can come when we can't see a good solution to our problems. How do you typically respond in those situations? Do you typically accept the options you have or fight to make better ones?

11. Read John 20:14-15. What happened when Mary turned around?

12. Why do you suppose Mary did not recognize Jesus?

13. Maybe Mary's eyes were blinded by tears. Or Mary was so deep in her despair and hopeless, she didn't even see the best possible outcome standing right before her eyes. Read Hebrews 12:2. How does the Bible say we are to keep our focus so that we are able to persevere?

14. Maybe Mary didn't see Jesus because she simply didn't believe she could. How many options may be before us if we are open to seeing them? As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, ask Jesus to help you keep your eyes fixed on Him in order to trust that He is there for you, too.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. Read John 20:11-13. As Mary peered into the empty tomb Easter morning and saw Jesus was gone, what did she ask the two angels?

16. Read the account in Luke 24:1-8. What question did the angels ask Mary?

17. Mary wasn't looking for a living Jesus, because, in her mind, it just wasn't possible. Mary's biggest hope in this moment is that she could recover Jesus' body. Do you blame her? In other words, is Mary guilty of small thinking or is she just realistic?

18. Are you the type of person that dreams big or tends to think small? Why do suppose you are oriented that way?

19. The evidence suggests Mary was not really an optimist. She'd seen Jesus perform miracles; she'd heard Him speak about His death and resurrection, but she did not come to the tomb expecting to find a miracle. (In her defense, neither did the men.) Look again at Luke 24:1. Why had she come to the tomb?

20. Mary had not come to find Jesus because she was an optimist; she came in an act of love, to care for His body and to make sure He had a proper burial. How can love change how we deal with hopeless situations?

21. Read 1 Peter 4:7-9 and write in your own words the guidance this passage gives.

22. If we are not blessed with natural optimism, maybe love is enough to help us find courage and hope in any hopeless situation, especially when we've been disappointed by the actions of others. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, pray that God would help you love those who've disappointed you.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

23. There are so many fresh starts in life that buoy our optimism for the future. Maybe it's a new semester of school with its chance to start over with a clean slate or a new job opportunity promising a new kind of future. Have you ever looked forward to the start of something new? How did that give you hope for a fresh start?

24. Read Luke 8:1-3. From what affliction had Mary Magdalene been rescued?

25. Mary wasn't looking for fresh start; she'd already had one. I am not sure if any of us can relate specifically to her experience, but most of us have struggled with something in our lives. What has been one of your biggest struggles? How has that struggle affected your life?

26. For three days, Mary and all of the disciples believed the worst. Their friend was dead; would they be next? What other things might have been on their minds?

27. It's hard to imagine what Mary was feeling on Easter morning. Mary hadn't just lost a good friend. Because of Jesus her life was different; she was different. How might she have felt about her future now that He was gone?

28. Jesus had once turned Mary's life from hopelessness to pure optimism and now that hope seemed to end with His death. It's easy to imagine that she wished she'd never been hopeful... that life might have been easier if she'd just accepted her fate and not gotten her hopes up. Have you ever experienced this feeling? How did you react? With Anger, sadness, or something else?

29. It takes a lot of faith to simply trust God when life seems hopeless, yet that's what exactly what God calls us to do... trust Him. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Confess those times when your faith has failed you and you doubted His good intentions for your life.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

30. Read John 20:11-18. What question did Jesus ask Mary in verse 15?

31. How did she answer Him in verse 16?

32. There is something powerful about names. We often see this as a theme in books. When someone uses a person's name it gives him power over that person. Have you ever noticed the difference between someone saying, "I love you", and saying it and using your name? It somehow adds a layer of intimacy for us. What happened when Jesus said Mary's name?

33. Mary had been talking to Jesus, yet she did not recognize Him. But when He said her name, instantly, she recognized Him and she cried out a term of endearment she used for Him. How might their reunion have been different if He had

said something like, “Hey. It’s me. I am alive!”?

34. Even after all Jesus had just experienced, He still approached Mary in the most gentle and loving way possible. He acknowledged her pain and He called her by name. Read John 10:27-28. According to this verse, how do Jesus’ followers (His sheep) know Him?

35. Just like Mary, Jesus calls each of us by name. He calls us gently and lovingly to offer hope and a life that is full. Conclude your final FIFTEEN this week by answering His call. Spend the rest of your time giving Him thanks and praise for giving His life for yours.