

ST-SN

Read
Mark 15:16–16:8

Our school's new band director is having a tough time recruiting musicians. Unfortunately, he is the fourth band director the kids have met in two years. Our once-proud marching band of 50 has dwindled down to only eight. Mr. Bryant shared with me a former marcher's response when he asked if the boy would consider coming back to the band. "Why would I bother? You'll just leave. Everybody leaves."

Abandonment is one of the most miserable experiences in the world. Jesus felt it in today's verses when He cried out to His seemingly absent Heavenly Father from the cross. Here's the good news: Jesus will never leave you. Although His disciples experienced His absence for three agonizing days, Jesus rose again, and He's not going anywhere.

Food For Thought

How does thinking about Christ's eternal presence in my life strengthen my faith?

What Now?

When friends turn away from you, turn to Jesus. Tell Him how you feel. Let Him remind you that you have one Friend who will never leave.

Read
John 11:25

A friend of mine lost her husband unexpectedly this past summer. She has a 15-year-old daughter who is struggling with her dad's death. She is sad, afraid, and angry. She told her grandma, "I am afraid I'll never feel okay again." What she's feeling is normal for anyone who has lost a loved one.

The pastor read today's verse at my friend's husband's funeral. It brought a lot of comfort to the family because their husband and dad knew Jesus. He isn't gone forever; he is with the Lord. They will see him again. People die, but in Christ they live again. In Christ hope lives again. In Christ peace and happiness live again. In Christ we are and always will be okay, even when we feel otherwise.

Food For Thought

In what situations has Christ brought back to life my hope for the future, my joy, or the peace in my heart?

What Now?

Memorize Jesus' words in today's verse.

MON

TUE

Read
John 20:1–10

Now what? I don't know about you, but I ask that question a lot. Sometimes it's in the middle of what appears to be a time of constant problems. My car tire goes flat; I burn supper; my alarm doesn't go off and I'm late for work. During times like these if my phone rings or buzzes with a notification I automatically think, *Now what? Now what has gone wrong?*

I bet the disciples wondered, as they raced toward Jesus' tomb, *Now what?* Jesus had been arrested, beaten, and crucified. He was dead. Now what were they going to do? Mary was upset. Now what had gone wrong? She said the tomb was empty. Now what had happened to Jesus? Thankfully, this time the answer was filled with hope and joy.

Food For Thought

What conclusions might I have drawn if I had been faced with the evidence Mary, Peter, and John saw?


What Now?

Now that you believe Jesus died on the cross, was buried, and rose again, what will you do in response?


Read
John 20:11-18

My daddy died about two years ago. Sometimes when I think about him I feel an overwhelming emptiness. One of the things I miss the most about him is his voice. My daddy had the gentlest voice. It carried the same quiet strength that marked every other area of his life. He was my rock, my safe place, my joy. When I heard that sweet voice call my name I knew I was in for an adventure. Time with my daddy was pure bliss.

I understand how heartbroken and empty Mary must've felt in today's verses. I also understand her reaction to hearing Jesus say her name. All the joy, love, hope, and peace she'd missed the past three days came rushing back as she rushed to embrace her Savior.

 Food For Thought

Whose voice fills me with joy when I hear it speak my name? How would I feel upon hearing that voice after being separated from my special person for a time?

 What Now?

Listen for and learn to recognize the voice of your Heavenly Father. He usually speaks quietly, a whisper to your heart. His voice calls you to love and serve others, to trust Him to lead you, and to share His salvation with others.

WED

Read
Acts 4:33


Our new girls' basketball coach has a big, booming voice. From all over the school we can hear him in the gym shouting out plays, encouragement, and correction. He isn't angry or rude in his loudness; his voice is just powerful.

My dad had a powerful voice too, but it was quiet. The things he said and the way he said them affected me deeply, but I had to listen closely to his gentle, mild voice.

The disciples spoke powerfully of Jesus' resurrection. The Bible doesn't say for sure, but my guess is that some of them did so with booming voices. Others probably spoke in powerful whispers. The power behind a person's testimony doesn't depend on volume or an advanced vocabulary; it originates from the love of Jesus.

 Food For Thought

What makes sharing the gospel powerful, whether I speak with a booming voice or a whisper?

 What Now?

Who needs to hear your story? How might your specific personality, whether it's extroverted or quiet, help these people better understand Jesus' love for them?

FRI

THU

Read
1 Peter 2:21-23

All of the teachers and staff members at the school where I work, in an effort to be healthier, are challenging ourselves to walk at least 10,000 steps per day. At this point in the challenge I am extremely frustrated because I can't seem to walk as many steps as my husband in any given day, no matter how hard I try.

In today's verses Peter informed us that we are called by God to walk in Christ's steps . . . by willingly suffering for others. I don't know about you, but I don't want to experience the kind of pain Jesus endured on the cross. So, what do we do when we realize we can't perfectly walk in His steps? We do what I am doing in the health challenge: we do our best, trusting that with every step we will grow stronger.

 Food For Thought

Who do I know who has willingly suffered for the benefit of others? Has anyone I know, other than Jesus, willingly suffered for me?

 What Now?

Suffering for others doesn't necessarily mean submitting to torture, but it always involves sacrifice. Brainstorm a list of sacrifices you can make to benefit others.

THEME

week two

Resurrection of Christ