

# GOD IS FAITHFUL



## ***People sometimes break promises; God never does.***

Ever been left with a broken promise?

- ▶ “I’ll pay you back tomorrow.”
- ▶ “The repairman will be at your house by 8:00.”
- ▶ “The doctor will see you shortly.”
- ▶ “I’ll always be there for you.”

Some broken promises can’t be avoided. After all, when we make promises we don’t know about traffic snarls or sudden illness. But whether the broken promise is a slight irritant—like forgetting to call a friend back—or a devastating blow—like a shattered marriage vow—when we experience enough broken promises, we may begin to question anyone’s ability to remain faithful to a promise. We can even lose hope.

Thankfully, God is not like us. God is always faithful—no matter what!

The reality of Jesus’ resurrection points to this great truth. By raising Jesus from the dead, God showed He makes the impossible possible. Nothing prevents Him from keeping His promise to us. God is faithful and will always do what He says. Jesus told us He would rise from the dead—and He did!

Let’s look at the resurrection of Jesus—that first day when Jesus came out of the tomb—and discover how we can have hope because God is faithful.



### **DAVID FLEMING**

David is Senior Pastor of Champion Forest Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, where he and his wife, Beverly, have served for ten years.



## SPECIAL FOCUS

# GOD IS FAITHFUL

### ► ***The Point***

The empty tomb points to the faithfulness of God.

### ► ***The Passage***

Luke 24:1-12

### ► ***The Bible Meets Life***

Skeptics often question the resurrection of Christ. But those who have objectively looked into it come away with a different conclusion. "I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead." –Thomas Arnold, Oxford University.<sup>6</sup> Harvard Law School professor, Dr. Simon Greenleaf, mocked Christians in his classroom until some challenged him to put the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus through the filter of the law. He took up the challenge and found the evidence so convincing he concluded the resurrection of Jesus is one of the most well-established facts of history.<sup>7</sup>

The evidence points to the resurrection of Jesus as a verifiable historical fact. This evidence also tells us something about God, the One who raised Jesus from the dead. Skeptics were present on that first morning of Jesus' resurrection, but God's faithfulness was also present.

### ► ***The Setting***

The narrative of Jesus' trial begins with His appearance before the Jewish Sanhedrin. (See Luke 22:66-71.) Subsequently, Jesus was brought before the Roman governor Pilate. (See 23:1-5, 13-25.) Pilate transferred the inquiry briefly to Herod Antipas. (See vv. 6-12.) Unable to dissuade the Jewish crowd, Pilate ordered Jesus crucified. (See vv. 13-49.) After His death on the cross, Jesus' body was placed in a new tomb. (See vv. 50-56.) Luke 24:1-12 records about the women's discovery of the empty tomb on Sunday morning.

## *What does the Bible say?*

### ***Luke 24:1-12***

<sup>1</sup> But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared.

<sup>2</sup> And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,

<sup>3</sup> but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>4</sup> While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.

<sup>5</sup> And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?

<sup>6</sup> He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,

<sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."

<sup>8</sup> And they remembered his words,

<sup>9</sup> and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

<sup>10</sup> Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles,

<sup>11</sup> but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

<sup>12</sup> But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

## GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes



**DISCUSS: Question #1** on page 51 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): **“What surprise ending has left you wondering, ‘How did that happen?’”** Allow time for each person to respond.

**ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL):** Prior to the group meeting, enlist two persons to perform a mock debate about the resurrection. One person should use arguments against the possibility of someone rising from the dead. The other person

should argue for the resurrection, pointing out that Jesus was not an average person but His resurrection demonstrated He was the Son of God. After the debate, share how Jesus’ resurrection demonstrates God’s faithfulness.

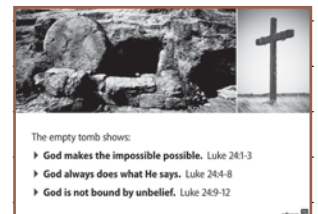
**GUIDE:** Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 52 of the PSG. Introduce the key theme of God’s faithfulness by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

**GUIDE:** Call attention to “The Point” on page 52 of the PSG: **“The empty tomb points to the faithfulness of God.”**

**LEADER PACK:** Display **Pack Item 4**, “The Empty Tomb” poster. Refer to this breakdown of the passage as you move through the session. Note the emphasis given to each Scripture division and how it supports “The Point.”

**PRAY:** Transition into the study by thanking the Lord for His faithfulness. Ask Him for His help understanding our Bible study today.

Notes



# STUDY THE BIBLE

## Notes

### Luke 24:1-3

***<sup>1</sup> But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. <sup>2</sup> And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.***

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud Luke 24:1-3 on page 53 of the PSG.

**RECAP:** Read the first two paragraphs after the Scripture on page 53 of the PSG.

At the beginning of Luke 24, resurrection was not on anyone's mind; they certainly weren't expecting it. Notice what the women were carrying as they came to the tomb: spices. These spices were not for cooking, however; they were to prepare their friend for His final burial.

The women were not expecting the stone to be rolled away from the tomb (see Mark 16:3-4); nor were they expecting the tomb to be empty. They knew they were at the right place. They had seen Jesus' body placed there. (See 15:47.) But now, on the morning of the third day, they walked in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. We should not be surprised they were "perplexed" (Luke 24:4), since they didn't find what they expected to find.

**GUIDE:** Use the last paragraph of the Commentary on the next page of this Leader Guide to offer additional information on the Jewish burial process during the Roman era.

**DISCUSS:** Question #2 on page 53 of the PSG: **"What do you remember about your earliest encounters with the resurrection story?"**

**TRANSITION:** The resurrection shows God made the impossible possible. In the next verses, we further see how God always does what He says.

#### ALTERNATE QUESTION:

***What do you find most surprising about these verses?***



---

## **Luke 24:1-3 Commentary**

**[Verse 1]** The phrase **on the first day of the week** connects subsequent events with those that occurred the previous week. One week earlier, Jesus had entered Jerusalem as the righteous and victorious King foretold by Zechariah. (See Zech. 9:9.) However, He had run afoul of powerful religious leaders and had been crucified on Friday. Late Friday afternoon two members of the Sanhedrin who had been secret followers of Jesus received permission from the Romans to bury Jesus. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were devout and affluent men who followed Jewish burial customs in preparing Jesus' body. (See John 19:38-40.) They wrapped the body in fine linen cloth. Approximately 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes was packed inside the shroud. The corpse was laid in a tomb in a nearby garden. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph observed the preparation and interment. (See Mark 15:47.) Other women may have watched as well.

The Jews reckoned days from sunset to sunset. So the Sabbath, the last day of the week, began at sunset that Friday. After Jesus' burial, some of the women prepared additional spices and perfumes to anoint the body further. That Sabbath Day, many of Jesus' followers undoubtedly remained concealed behind locked doors in a state of shock, fearing the Jewish authorities. Sunday morning, a group of women ventured out to the tomb. Luke placed the time at **early dawn**. The walk from their houses to the burial place took time. If it was dark when the women left, sunrise easily started illuminating the area before they reached the tomb. Furthermore, the women may not have traveled in a single group. Therefore one woman might say it was dark (see John 20:1) and another might say the day was dawning. (See Matt. 28:1.) The women's behavior reveals both their great love for Jesus and their emotional state of mind. They brought **the spices they had prepared** in order to anoint Jesus' body.

**[Verses 2-3]** The description of the tomb suggests it was typical of those for wealthy Jews in the Roman era. It was an unused tomb. Difficulty in cutting out the stone around Jerusalem prompted many affluent individuals to prepare their tombs well in advance of their deaths. Tombs usually had a low door with steps that led down into the main room. Often a recessed floor left a ledge on three sides of the room. The deceased body was laid on the ledge. After approximately a year in which the flesh decayed, the bones were transferred. A large stone disc was rolled into a sloping groove and rested against the opening of the tomb. Removing the stone required considerable effort. However, when the women reached Jesus' tomb, the stone had been dislodged and the entrance was wide open. Did the women approach the entrance cautiously or did they rush in? The Gospel narratives do not inform us. However, Luke clearly stated what the women observed inside the tomb. The body of Jesus was not there. Except for the presence of the burial cloths (see John 20:6-7), the tomb was empty. Though they did not yet understand it, God had faithfully raised Jesus, making the impossible possible.





10 minutes

# STUDY THE BIBLE

## Notes

### Luke 24:4-8

<sup>4</sup> While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. <sup>5</sup> And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup> He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." <sup>8</sup> And they remembered his words,

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud Luke 24:4-8 on page 54 of the PSG.

**SUMMARIZE:** Highlight the main points from pages 54-55 of the PSG.

- ▶ Two men—angels (see Matt. 28:5)—appeared and asked a single question: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"
- ▶ The men gave only one option for Jesus' absence in this place of the dead. No one stole His body; nor did He revive from unconsciousness in the cool of the tomb. "He is not here, but has risen."
- ▶ Scripture records almost nine thousand promises from God. We can trust the One who extended these promises to us because the empty tomb means God's words and His promises are not empty. He does what He says He will do.

**GUIDE:** Use the first paragraph of the Commentary on the next page of this Leader Guide to share background on the angels who greeted the women at the tomb.

**DISCUSS:** Question #3 on page 54 of the PSG: "Why do we sometimes doubt or forget what God has promised?"

**TRANSITION:** Not only does the resurrection show God always does what He says, but in the next verses we also see God is not bound by unbelief.

#### ALTERNATE QUESTION:

*What are some specific promises from Scripture God has fulfilled in your life?*

---

## Luke 24:4-8 Commentary

**[Verse 4]** Not only does the resurrection show that God makes the impossible possible, it also shows that He does what He says. The women **were perplexed**—at a loss to find an explanation for what they saw. Suddenly they realized they were not the only ones inside the empty tomb. Luke wrote that **two men stood by them in dazzling apparel**. Matthew and John identified the messengers as angels. Within Scripture, excluding cherubim and seraphim, angels have the appearance of men. Hence, Luke also described the appearance of the angels. The angels' garments were long white robes. In the original Greek language the word "lightning" is related to the term Luke used to describe the robes. The sense seems to be that the angelic garments possessed a mysterious supernatural quality.

**[Verses 5-6]** The response of the women to the sudden appearance of two angels was sheer terror. I've often imagined the angels with a puzzled expression. They asked, **"Why do you seek the living among the dead?"** The question called attention to the absurdity of searching for Jesus in the wrong place. Tombs hold only the dead. Jesus no longer was dead. He was and still is alive. The term *angel* means messenger. Delivering messages for God is a primary function that angels perform. The angels announced Jesus' resurrection: **"He is not here."** Jesus was not in a burial chamber because He had been resurrected! The challenge for them to remember His teaching about the resurrection assumes they knew what Jesus had said about it.

**[Verses 7-8]** The designation **Son of Man** occurs over 80 times in the Gospels. Jesus used this title to describe Himself more than any other term. The term has twofold significance. First it denoted Jesus' humanity. Second, it was an important messianic title. (See Dan. 7:13-14.) The title was Jesus' own designation of Himself as the predicted Messiah. The largest number of Son of Man sayings concern His second coming. The second largest group involve His suffering, death, and resurrection. The women likely had understood Jesus' use of *Son of Man* as messianic. However, the crucifixion shattered their hope He actually was the Messiah. The angels' entreaty to remember Jesus' words called them to accept that the events of the weekend in reality proved He was the Messiah.

The phrases **must be delivered into the hands of sinful men** and **be crucified** no doubt reflected various comments He had made regarding His betrayal and death. Predictions of His death were accompanied by predictions of His resurrection. Jesus' death for our sins and His resurrection are the heart of the gospel. (See 1 Cor. 15:1-11.) Responding by faith in Christ to its proclamation brings salvation. (See Acts 16:30-31; Rom. 1:16.) Although Jesus repeatedly warned His followers about His death, their preconceived notions about a triumphant Messiah meant they failed to grasp the truth of His words. Therefore, when He was crucified, they were bewildered. Confronted with the evidence of the empty tomb and the testimony of the two angels, they began to fathom the meaning of what Jesus had said. And they began to understand that God is faithful—the resurrection demonstrated again that God always does what He says.



15 minutes

# STUDY THE BIBLE

## Notes

### Luke 24:9-12

<sup>9</sup> and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup> Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, <sup>11</sup> but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup> But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

#### ALTERNATE QUESTION:

*Why is Jesus' resurrection a crucial doctrine of the Christian faith?*

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud Luke 24:9-12 on page 55 of the PSG.

**DISCUSS:** Question #4 on page 55 of the PSG: "What emotions come to the surface when you read this passage?"

**DISCUSS:** Question #5 on page 56 of the PSG: "What are some possible responses to Jesus' resurrection?"

**RECAP:** Read the following paragraph from page 56 of the PSG.

The empty tomb is proof positive that God is not bound by our unbelief. God did what He did because He is ultimately faithful to Himself. He does not have earthly limits, neither is He necessarily limited by our lack of faith. Faith is important, but God can and sometimes will accomplish His plans in spite of our unbelief or lack of faith. God is always faithful to Himself, His promises, and His purposes—and so you can believe He will always be faithful to you.

**DO:** Direct group members to complete the activity "He Is Faithful" on page 57 of the PSG. As time permits, encourage volunteers to share responses.



*Circle the areas of life below where you've seen God's faithfulness.  
Then write a prayer of thanks to Him.*

**My health   My finances   My work   My family   My education  
My relationships   My hobbies   My giving**

*My Prayer:*

---

## Luke 24:9-12 Commentary

**[Verse 9]** The resurrection shows us that unbelief does not bind God. Most of those followers had traveled together with Him from Galilee. Therefore, it was natural for them to stay together in a city where they were visitors. Likewise, Jesus' execution generated two human emotions that drew them together—grief and fear. Jesus had been persecuted and condemned. Consequently, His followers might expect a similar fate. After their encounter with the angels at the empty tomb, the women reported what they had witnessed to Jesus' followers. The phrase **all the rest** indicates the women notified Jesus' other followers about what they had seen and heard that morning. In the absence of Jesus, His followers looked to those He had chosen to be His apostles. (See Luke 6:12-16.) Judas had committed suicide. (See Matt. 27:3-5.) Only **the eleven** remained on that first Sunday after His death.

**[Verses 10-11]** Luke identified some of those women who witnessed the events at the tomb. Mary Magdalene had been a devoted follower of Jesus since He cast seven demons out of her. Mary the mother of James and Joseph was another eyewitness to the resurrection of Jesus. Joanna was the wife of Herod's steward. She too had followed Jesus after being healed by Him. She was among those women who contributed financial support to Jesus' ministry. The **other women** were not named. Some of the women were so astonished and terrified by the experience they could not talk. (See Mark 16:8.) Some met the risen Christ on their way to tell the disciples about events at the tomb. (See Matt. 28:8-9.) No doubt their testimony added confusion to the minds of the men to whom they spoke. To the men their statements about angels, an empty tomb, and a living Jesus **seemed ... an idle tale**.


**[Verse 12]** A comparison of all four Gospel accounts suggests Mary Magdalene apparently fled the tomb after seeing the stone rolled away from the entrance. She ran to find Peter and reported, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him" (John 20:2). Immediately Peter raced out to the tomb, pursued by John. John soon overtook Peter and reached the tomb first. He stooped down, looked inside, and saw the linen cloths but he did not enter. Peter arrived and entered the tomb for a closer look. After finding the tomb empty, Peter **went home** to the house where he was staying in Jerusalem. Luke reported that he was **marveling** at the events that had occurred. Peter had not yet met the risen Christ, nor had he comprehended the Old Testament's predictions concerning the Messiah's death and resurrection. Nevertheless, he was beginning to believe something miraculous and inexplicable had occurred.

Peter had initially considered the women's tale about finding an empty tomb and angels proclaiming that Jesus was alive to be unbelievable. Even after visiting the tomb, Peter still did not believe Jesus was alive. Yet God is not bound by unbelief and proved as much with the resurrection.

Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles "Mary Magdalene: All We Know" (Spring 2010), "The Reality of Jesus' Resurrection" (Spring 2007), "Popular First-Century Views of Death" (Spring 1995), "Tombs and Sepulchers" (Spring 1988), and "The Women at the Tomb" (Spring 1976) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator).



## Notes

- **Believe.** Jesus invites you to follow Him. If you have never trusted in Christ, place your faith in Him. Talk to someone in your group about your desire to believe and trust in Christ.
- 
- **Investigate.** If you still wonder if the resurrection of Jesus is something we can count on, look into it for yourself. Read a book such as *Risen Savior: The Search for Jesus' Tomb* by Charles Quarles or *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel.
- **Trust.** God is faithful to what He promised, and because of this, Jesus' tomb is empty. Since God can handle something so miraculous and powerful as raising someone from the dead, trust Him with the struggles you are facing. Turn your cares over to Him. Trust in the One who is eternally faithful.

**TRANSITION:** Read or restate the final paragraph from page 58 of the PSG:

It's okay to start out as skeptics, but we should be honest ones. And if we are, we'll find that the faithful God who has always been there for us, will be in the future.

**PRAY:** Conclude by thanking God for His faithfulness as displayed in the resurrection. Ask Him for opportunities to share the hope of the resurrection with others this week.



**MINISTRY GRID**  
training made simple

**Get expert insights on weekly studies through the Ministry Grid.**

MinistryGrid.com/web/BibleStudiesForLife