



PREPARATION

- > **Spend the week studying John 20:19-22.** Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.
- > **Determine** which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > **Pray** for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their receptivity to God's Word.
- > **Focus on the Main Point.** The resurrection Christ allows us to trade our fears for the peace of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

What are some common fears people have? Why do you think people have these particular fears? What is the root behind these fears?

Ask those who feel comfortable to share about a time they were afraid. What would have helped them in that moment?

Can you think of an attitude or emotion that is the opposite of fear?

Fear is a natural emotion. Part of being human is dealing with fear. Sometimes it is good to be afraid. Fear can keep us from engaging in activity that may potentially be harmful to us. Fear becomes a detriment to us when it begins to control us. On the first Easter Sunday night, Jesus appeared to His disciples in a locked upper room where they hid, fearing for their lives. Their teacher and friend had been executed and buried in a tomb, and their future was uncertain. The disciples encounter with Jesus replaced their fear with a peace that only comes from God. When we encounter Jesus, we meet the Prince of Peace.

LEARN

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 20:19-20.

Earlier in this chapter, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb to complete the burial preparations (v. 1). When she arrived at the tomb, she saw that it was empty and ran to get Peter and John. Both ran to inspect the empty tomb. John believed (v. 8), but Peter was less sure. After this, the disciples went home, understandably afraid.

What do you imagine went through the disciples' minds while Jesus was in the tomb?

How did disciples react to what they saw at the tomb? Why were they afraid of the Jews?

The disciples, connected to the high-profile ministry and ensuing controversy involving Jesus, had a legitimate cause for concern about their lives after their Master was violently and publicly executed. Yet they also had witnessed His power, heard Him foretell His death, and even seen His resurrected form. Their fear, then, was most likely rooted in their continued confusion concerning the plans of Jesus. Though they had faith in His power, they did not yet comprehend His purpose, so they hid and doubted.

What is significant about Jesus' words to His disciples when He appeared to them?

"Peace be with you" was both a traditional greeting and a statement of comfort. Before heading to the cross, Jesus promised to bring His disciples peace (14:27; 16:33). The cross provided that peace. The Hebrew word for peace, "shalom," carries the meaning of unqualified well being which is now available to all through Christ.

Which do you think the disciples were more comforted by, Jesus' words or his physical presence? Why?

Jesus showed the disciples His feet and His hands. Why did He do this? How did they respond after they saw His wounds?

What does the nature of Jesus' resurrection body teach us about the resurrection?

Jesus showed His disciples His hands and feet to assure them they were not hallucinating and that He was as physically present as they were. Their friend and Savior who was crucified and buried had returned from the grave. Jesus had a physical body that was instantly recognizable to His disciples—this gave them comfort. Not only did Jesus verify His identity, He also provided a new definition of peace. Peace is not an abstract feeling but a person. Jesus Christ's atoning work on the cross provides, all who encounter and believe His message, an unfailing peace.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 20:21-22.

Why do you think Jesus repeated "Peace be with you" in verse 21 and again in verse 26?

Now that the disciples understood Jesus had risen what does He empower them to do? For what purpose does Jesus bring us peace?

Upon whose authority does Jesus commission the disciples?

Each gospel writer has some version of the Great Commission, and these verses constitute John's version. The peace given to the disciples shouldn't end with them or with us. Peace has a purpose: to be shared. As

the Father sent the Son to bring us peace, we share the peace of Christ with others. This is what Jesus saved us to do. We are saved to be sent.

Read Genesis 2:7. Do you notice any parallels between the creation of man and the giving of the Holy Spirit in John 20?

Who empowers the disciples to complete the mission of the church? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian ministry?

How do these 3 verses highlight the trinitarian nature of salvation and Christian mission? Where do we see all 3 persons of the Trinity?

Breath is a necessary process to sustain life. When God created Adam, He breathed life into Him. When Jesus gave the disciples new life, He breathed the Holy Spirit upon them. The new life comes with a special empowerment of the Holy Spirit to do the work of Christ. As Matthew put it, "all authority" has been given to Jesus. Sharing the peace of Christ is done under the unique power of the Holy Spirit and with the authority of the risen Christ.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 14:25-27.

How do these verses predict and fulfill the empowerment and peace given by Jesus in John 20?

Jesus makes it clear in verse 27 that He would leave the disciples. What did He also promise to leave them with? How does peace help us to trust Jesus and not be afraid?

When we lose sight of the person, purpose, and power of peace we have in Jesus, it is easy to fear. Jesus never intended for us to live a life of fear. He did everything necessary to secure peace for us. Though it was always Jesus' plan to depart and go to the Father, we are better for His leaving because the Holy Spirit gives us a unique power and peace to know Christ and fulfill the Great Commission.

LIVE

Where do you most often look for peace and comfort? On Sunday we learned peace is a person. When you are afraid or anxious, do you look to Jesus? Where else are you tempted to look to? How can you center your heart and mind on the peace of Christ?

Do you realize the power you have in the Holy Spirit? What would it look like to trust the Holy Spirit who has all the power you need to do the ministry God has called you to? Can you think of someone who has taken hold of this truth and could help you grow in it?

LEAD

We experience the peace of Christ in community. Do those in your group encourage one another to be people of peace? Do you support and comfort one another in hard times?

We learned on Sunday that peace is more than a feeling, and that peace has a purpose. Does the peace you have received from Christ motivate you to share that peace with others? How can you encourage each other week by week to share the gospel of peace so more people can encounter Jesus?

PRAY

Thank God for the peace with have in Christ. Confess your need for the peace that is only available in the person of Jesus. Ask that God would give you a confident assurance of His goodness and the unique power of the Holy Spirit to do the work of ministry. Pray that your small group would encourage one another daily to share the peace of Christ with all you encounter.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- 1. Is your life characterized by peace? If not, what word could you use to describe your life?**
- 2. Is there something in your life you are afraid of right now? What do you think Jesus would say about it?**

COMMENTARY

JOHN 20:19-20

20:19-20. The disciples had almost been arrested with Jesus. They remained under the fear of death at the hands of the Jews (i.e., the Jewish authorities), so they met in secret at night, with fear, behind locked doors. (What a contrast with their boldness about seven weeks later on the day of Pentecost!) Jesus passed through the door, as indicated by the fact that when the doors were locked, He came and stood among them (see v. 26). This showed the power of His new resurrection body. But His body had substantial form and continuity with His pre-Cross body (see v. 27).

His first words, "Peace be with you!" were a conventional greeting similar to *šālōm* in Hebrew. But the words were now invested with a deeper and fuller meaning (see 14:27; 16:33; Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7). Seeing the wounds in His pierced hands and side, they were overjoyed (though at first they were frightened, as Luke stated [see Luke 24:37-44]). What a change from their fear and despondency!

20:21–22. Jesus then recommissioned the disciples as His apostles: He was sending them as His representatives, as the Father had sent Him (see 17:18). They were sent with His authority to preach, teach, and do miraculous signs (see Matt. 28:16-20; Luke 24:47-49). For their new commission, they needed spiritual power. So He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." The image and wording of breathing on them recalls God's creative work in making Adam (see Gen. 2:7). Now this post-Resurrection "breathing" was a new kind of creative work for they would soon become new creations (see Eph. 2:8-10). This reception of the Spirit was in anticipation of the day of Pentecost and should be understood as a partial limited gift of knowledge, understanding, and empowerment until Pentecost, 50 days later.

JOHN 14:25-27.

14:25–27. The Holy Spirit reminds us of truth that Jesus taught. In the case of the disciples, it was an immediate application to their spiritual memories. In our case, it is assistance in understanding and applying the Word of God. In their lives and ours, constant awareness of the Spirit's presence is a daily practicality.

But Jesus also promised peace. Verse 27 reminds us of the early verses of this chapter: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you ... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. Let us remember that these were troubled, frightened disciples. They needed assurance of peace. But they were not peculiar in that need. Peace of spirit and mind is an essential part of a healthy home, a healthy workplace, and a healthy life. But only those who have peace with God can have the peace of God.