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SPRING SUMMER 2014

HOPE HOUSE CHURCH

**Week 1 (7 & 8 May)**A Life-Transforming Encounter  
John 20:1-18

**Week 2 (21 & 22 May)**An Eye Opening Journey  
Luke 24:13-35

**Connect Group Social (28 & 29 May)**

**Week 3 (4 & 5 June)**When Jesus Comes In The Midst  
John 20:19-31

**Week 4 (18 & 19 June)**Overcoming Failure  
John 21:1-22

**Week 5 (2 & 3 July)**Made For Mission  
Matthew 28:16-20

**Week 6 (16 & 17 July)**Final Preparations  
Acts 1:1-11; Luke 24:45-53

**www.40days.info**

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All Scripture references are from the Holy Bible, New International Version Anglicised (NIV)

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**INTRO**

Over these next 40 days we are going to be looking at the amazing story of the 40 days that Jesus spent on earth, from His resurrection on that first Easter Sunday through to His ascension to heaven. To start the series we’re going to explore the first resurrection appearance of Jesus. The two key points we’ll be looking at are:

1. The **compelling evidence** for the resurrection
2. The **life-transforming effects** of the resurrection

**BRING YOUR BIBLES**

Read aloud **John 20:1–18**, encouraging everyone to follow along in their own Bibles. The more translations the better as each may highlight something different.

Now allow the whole group the opportunity to share what stood out anew to them and why.



**QUESTIONS**

1. What particularly impacted you from this week’s message?
2. What evidence is there within these passages that Jesus really is alive?
3. What is the significance of Mary Magdalene being the first person to visit the empty tomb and meet the risen Jesus?
4. When Mary runs to report what she has seen to two disciples, they run straight to the tomb. Why the sense of urgency at that time? How does this compare to our sense of urgency in knowing the risen Jesus and telling others about Him today?
5. The passage says that when the ‘other disciple’ saw the grave clothes, ‘He saw and believed’. What confidence can we have in what *we’ve* *seen* that Jesus is risen?
6. How does Jesus transform Mary’s sense of hopelessness and despair? What does this show us about God’s heart for us and the need for us to encounter Him in our own lives?
7. Once Mary realised that she was speaking with Jesus, what did He mean when He told her, ‘Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father’?
8. Do we ever ‘hold on to’ things or people when we should celebrate them but let them go in anticipation for something better yet to come?

**SHARE YOUR STORY**

You can discuss the following questions together as one group or, if individuals prefer, you could split into groups of twos or threes.

* When you became a Christian, what first convinced you to believe? Allow everyone the time to briefly share their testimony if they are willing.
* Why do you think it is important that Christianity is not a speculative leap of faith but is grounded in historical evidence?
* To be ‘really alive’ is to be free from the power of darkness, the fear of death and the grip of despair. Which one of these have you found to have the strongest hold on your life in the past? What practical steps did you take to overcome it?

**PRAY TOGETHER**

Take the time to invite the Holy Spirit, perhaps begin with prayers of worship and thanksgiving, then you may choose to follow these suggestions for specific prayer:

You could pray:

* for individuals [name them in your hearts if not aloud] in your neighbourhoods or networks who do not know Jesus. Pray that they would have the opportunity to learn about these convincing proofs
* for anyone you know who is trapped by darkness, fear of death, or despair
* for individuals in the group that would like prayer for help in these types of struggles
* that every person in the group would know that they are free to live ‘really alive’ and to claim that freedom.



**INTRO**

In this session we are going to look at the appearance of Jesus on the road to Emmaus and consider these two principles:

1. Our vision of Jesus **can be blurred**
2. Our vision of Jesus **can be corrected**

**BRING YOUR BIBLES**

Read aloud **Luke 24:13–35**, encouraging everyone to follow along in their own Bibles. The more translations the better as each may highlight something different.

Now allow the whole group the opportunity to share what stood out anew to them and why.



**QUESTIONS**

1. What particularly impacted you from this week’s message?
2. What is the mood of the disciples at the beginning of this passage? How has their vision of Jesus become blurred?
3. God is not distant in our despair, but comes to meet us right in the midst of it. Have you experienced particular times in your life when, looking back, you realise Jesus’ presence was with you but you didn’t recognise Him?
4. In verses 25–27 how does Jesus begin to ‘correct the disciples’ vision’? How often do we look to God’s Word in our daily lives to help us correct our own vision?
5. Read verse 32. How is our experience of reading the Scriptures so often different? Why might this be?
6. In verse 29 we read that the disciples responded to the presence of Jesus by pleading with Him to stay. In contrast, read the extract from an interview with Duncan Bannatyne (below) and discuss how his encounter with God impacts you.

In his book *Anyone Can Do It*, Duncan Bannatyne shares about a close encounter he had with God while in Romania – just after seeing the plight of the local people. He writes:

*For me the tears came at about ten o’clock that night. I went outside and found a quiet place at the side of the house. I couldn’t stop the tears, my face was wet, my nose began to run and I was a mess. I had no choice but to let the tears flow; and they just kept pouring out of me and wouldn't stop. After many minutes I began to get the feeling that I wasn’t alone.*

*It was there and then that God said hello. I felt that I had been consumed by this presence, that something had completely shrouded and taken hold of me. It was unmistakable: I knew who had come and I also knew why. It wasn’t a spiritual thing, it was a Christian thing, and I felt I was being told, ‘you’ve arrived, join the faith, be a Christian, this is it’. It was profound, and I stood there, stunned, considering the offer and thinking about what it would mean. I knew I wanted to keep on building up my businesses and I wanted to keep making money, and I also knew I wanted to carry on doing all the things I wasn’t proud of – I knew I was never going to be this totally Christian guy going to church on Sundays. So I said, ‘No, I'm not ready.’ And God said, ‘OK,’ and disappeared.*

Although he admits he’s not ready for the full-on ‘Christian thing’, Bannatyne says he believes there is a God. He is quoted by *The Mayfair Times* as stating, ‘I know that, because I met Him and we’ll all answer to Him one day – there’s no doubt about it.’

1. Jesus continued to reveal Himself to the disciples by eating with them. Compare Luke 24:30–31 with Genesis 3:1–7. What are the differences between these two accounts? What had the disciples’ eyes now been opened to? What is the significance of this on our relationship with God?

**SHARE YOUR STORY**

You can discuss the following questions together as one group or, if individuals prefer, you could split into groups of twos or threes.

* **How have you come to know Jesus** better over recent weeks through our fresh consideration of the cross, and Jesus’ amazing sacrifice. Share together your thoughts as to why Jesus is special to you.
* **How do you approach the Bible?** Do you use it as a moral guide or for encouragement? How much is it about building the portrait and revealing the personality of our Lord Jesus Christ? Have you had times when reading it made your heart burn within (Luke 24:32)?
* **How much do you want Jesus’ presence to stay with you?** The disciples urged Him strongly to stay with them (Luke 24:29). Are you hungry for more of the Spirit of Jesus in your life? What would it mean for you to invite Him in afresh?

**PRAY TOGETHER**

Take the time to invite the Holy Spirit, perhaps begin with prayers of worship and thanksgiving, then you may choose to follow these suggestions for specific prayer. You could pray:

* for individuals [name them in your hearts if not aloud] in your neighbourhoods or networks who do not know Jesus. Pray that their eyes would be opened to see Him
* for people to see God through the works of Christians and the Church
* for individuals in the group who need eye-opening guidance
* that every person in your group would see Jesus afresh today
* that when you read and study the Bible in the future, you will know a fresh sense of Jesus’ presence opening up the Scriptures to you personally, as He did with those disciples on the road to Emmaus.



**INTRO**

In this session we are looking at a truly life-changing encounter which took place on that Easter Sunday evening, when Jesus first appeared to His disciples as a group. The two key points we’ll be looking at are:

* When we encounter Jesus, **He changes us**
* Then, **He sends us out** to change the world around us

**BRING YOUR BIBLES**

Read aloud **John 20:19–23**, encouraging everyone to follow along in their own Bibles. The more translations the better as each may highlight something different.

Now allow the whole group the opportunity to share what stood out anew to them and why.



**QUESTIONS**

1. What particularly impacted you from this week’s message?
2. How would you describe the mood of the disciples at the beginning of this passage? Given the evidence we have looked at over the last two weeks, are you surprised that they are living ‘in fear’?
3. How does Jesus convince His disciples that it really is Him? What is the significance of Jesus showing them His ‘hands and side’ and what impact does it have on them?
4. Like the disciples, the resurrection of Jesus offers us new hope – hope for our future, hope beyond the grave, hope into eternity. How does that hope impact our lives now?
5. What purpose does Jesus give to His disciples in verse 21? How does He equip the disciples to fulfill this purpose? *Note for the leader: New Power (v22), New Authority (v23).*
6. Is this purpose still relevant in our lives today?
7. What do you make of Jesus breathing on the disciples in order for them to receive the Holy Spirit? Looking back at Genesis 2:7, what are the similarities and differences between these two accounts?
8. How would you share your sense of being a new creation with someone who doesn’t yet know Christ?

**SHARE YOUR STORY**

You can discuss the following questions together as one group or, if individuals prefer, you could split into groups of twos or threes.

* How can we know Jesus’ peace even when we can’t physically see Him? Are you able to share a time when you recently experienced His joy or peace in your life?
* Where do you sense God has sent you or is going to send you to live out His Great Commission? On a scale of one to ten, how passionate are you for this aspect of mission?
* Share together how either you have led someone to find forgiveness through encountering Christ, or how someone led you to first find forgiveness in His name.

**PRAY TOGETHER**

Take the time to invite the Holy Spirit into your group. Perhaps begin with prayers of worship and thanksgiving, then you may choose to follow these suggestions for specific prayer:

You could pray:

1. that as you all go into your daily lives and have your daily devotions, you’ll expect new encounters with Jesus
2. for the Holy Spirit to fill you and to keep on filling you with His peace, hope and joy
3. for a fresh passion for God’s purposes in your life
4. that every person in the group would realise their great power and authority, as given from God, and use it for His glory.



**INTRO**

In this session we are going to be looking at a stunning example of overcoming failure. Simon Peter reached a very low point in his life when he denied Jesus three times. Yet within a couple of months, he was boldly preaching about Jesus on the Day of Pentecost, and became one of the greatest leaders in the history of the Church. What made the difference? An encounter with the risen Jesus! This story contains two hugely encouraging lessons:

1. Jesus helps us in our present struggles
2. Jesus heals us from our **past failures**

**BRING YOUR BIBLES**

Read aloud **John 21:1–17**, encouraging everyone to follow along in their own Bibles. The more translations the better as each may highlight something different.

Now allow the whole group the opportunity to share what stood out anew to them and why.



**QUESTIONS**

1. What particularly impacted you from this week’s message?
2. What particular struggle are the disciples facing in verses 1–3? What strikes you about the problem and/or the context of the situation?

* *Note to leader: there is nothing extraordinary about the situation. This is the disciples normal day-to-day life, they were getting on with their daily routine.*

1. In verse 4 we see how Jesus is present in the midst of the disciples’ daily struggles. Do we believe that this is still true for us today? Are we like the disciples who initially fail to recognise Him? How might we allow Jesus to speak into our daily routine and struggles?
2. How did the disciples respond to the advice Jesus gave them? How can we be open to His calling in our lives?
3. Read the following phrase out loud and take a moment in quiet to dwell on it:

*The Creator has all the knowledge and power that we will ever need. He knows more about the fish than the fishermen! He knows more about accountancy than the accountant, more about business than the entrepreneur, more about parenting than parents, more about teaching than teachers, more about life and more about reaching people than we do!*

Do you believe this to be true, and if so how should it affect our lives and decision making?

1. Look at verse 5. How does Jesus refer to the disciples? What does this reveal to us about the heart of God?
2. In verses 15–17 we see God’s heart for us being demonstrated through Jesus’ discussion with Peter. Jesus is coming to him to heal him from his past failure, not to condemn him. What strikes you about how Jesus speaks to Peter? How is this different to when we have been let down by someone else or when we have let someone else down?
3. What is the significance of Jesus’ question to Peter? Why is He focusing so strongly on Peter’s love and heart for Him?
4. In denying Jesus three times how was Peter failing to keep the great commandment: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength?

* *Note to leader: Despite showing courage by following Jesus, Peter’s reaction ultimately revealed that he loved himself, his reputation and what others thought of him – more than he loved Jesus.*

**SHARE YOUR STORY**

You can discuss the following questions together as one group or, if individuals prefer, you could split into groups of two or three.

* Are there times in your life when, like Peter, you have very specifically known the love and forgiveness of Jesus? How has His forgiveness empowered and equipped you to move forward into His ministry?
* ‘The call is greater than the fall.’ Think of Bible accounts of other people who experienced a fall, but were re-instated by God. Encourage each other with Bible promises that we can draw on when facing a sense of failure (eg Romans 8:27–39).

**PRAY TOGETHER**

Take the time to invite the Holy Spirit. Perhaps begin with prayers of worship and thanksgiving, then you may choose to follow these suggestions for specific prayer:

You could pray:

* for anyone in the group who is facing past or present failure
* that God will give you ‘surprise appointments’ with people who need to know that Jesus helps with past and present failure
* that you will all know Jesus’ power and presence wherever you go.



**INTRO**

We’re looking today at the Great Commission and discovering our life’s mission. Have you ever wondered what on earth you are really here for or looked into the whole question of discovering our purpose in life?

The answer to this is something Jesus focused on significantly during the 40 days after His resurrection. One of the focal points of His teaching was telling His disciples how they were to continue His mission on the earth. Today we are looking at a particular incident when Jesus appeared to His followers on a mountain in Galilee. There are two things we are going to look at concerning our life mission:

1. The **source of our mission** is Jesus
2. The **goal of our mission** is transformed lives

**BRING YOUR BIBLES**

Read aloud **Matthew 28:16–20**, encouraging everyone to follow along in their own Bibles. The more translations the better as each may highlight something different.

Now allow the whole group the opportunity to share what stood out anew to them and why.



**QUESTIONS**

1. What particularly impacted you from this week’s message?
2. Read verse 18. How does our understanding of who Jesus is affect our understanding of who we are and what our mission is? Are there other factors or people in our lives who might try and influence our calling?
3. In verses 19–20 Jesus lays out what is known as ‘the Great Commission’. What are the three things He calls us to do? To what extent do these three factors influence our daily lives, decision making and conversations?
4. This calling on us as followers of Christ highlights that we are together on a mission. What benefit do you think Jesus sees in us fulfilling His commission together, rather than on our own?
5. Read verses 19–20. Unpack the detail of what ‘going and making disciples’ involves. On a personal level, who are we seeking to reach? Think of one of your friends who does not yet believe in Jesus. Imagine or ‘see’ them when they are fully devoted and in love with Jesus. How do you see them getting from where they are now, to where God would love them to be?
6. Think about this coming week. Where will you be going? Who will you be meeting? In what ways will knowing that Jesus has all authority affect how you think, behave and pray in these situations and settings?

**SHARE YOUR STORY**

You can discuss the following questions together as one group or, if individuals prefer, you could split into groups of two or three.

* Verse 17 reminds us that some worshipped, but some doubted, even though the risen Jesus was standing right in front of them! Can you think of a time in your Christian journey when you needed to process some truth about God, before you could fully own it?
* Verse 18 speaks about the absolute authority the Father has invested in Jesus Christ (authority is the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and call to obedience). What would you do in the name of Jesus, if you knew that you could not fail? Share anything that God is stirring your heart to do.

**PRAY TOGETHER**

Take the time to invite the Holy Spirit. Perhaps begin with prayers of worship and thanksgiving, then you may choose to follow these suggestions for specific prayer:

You could pray:

* that any doubts in God would continue to diminish so that we can worship and love Him with all our heart, strength and mind
* for a fresh revelation of the authority each one of us has in Christ
* for those we will meet with in the coming week – that their hearts would be prepared and that we would be ready for any opportunity to bring them closer to Jesus.



**INTRO**

So what’s next after the 40 days? Indeed, is there life after the 40 days?! This question of what was next was something that Jesus addressed in His final encounter with the disciples, immediately prior to His ascension to heaven.

Rather than this being the end, Jesus reassured the disciples that they are about to experience a new beginning, and He points the way to an event that was to take place ten days later, **the coming of the Holy Spirit***.*

The Day of Pentecost is the main subject of Jesus’ last encounter with the disciples in Jerusalem, recorded in slightly different ways at the end of Luke’s Gospel and the first chapter of Acts (both written by Luke). Through these wonderful verses we can learn three things:

* The Holy Spirit is **The Great Promise of the Father**
* The Holy Spirit is **The Great Power of the Trinity**
* The Holy Spirit is **Our Great Partner for the Mission**

**BRING YOUR BIBLES**

Read aloud **Acts 1:1–11 and Luke 24:45–53**, encouraging everyone to follow along in their own Bibles. The more translations the better as each may highlight something different.

Now allow the whole group the opportunity to share what stood out anew to them and why.



**QUESTIONS**

1. What particularly impacted you from this week’s message?
2. In Acts 1:1–3, Luke provides us with a brief summary of the 40 days in which Jesus appeared to His disciples. As we approach the end of this 40-day series, which of the accounts that we have looked at has most struck you and changed you? Why have you chosen that specific account?
3. Note to leader: It would be good to dedicate a significant amount of time to this question so that the group can share openly about their journey over the last 5 weeks.
4. Read Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4. How does Jesus refer to the Holy Spirit? How are you encouraged knowing that we, as the Church of Jesus, are to receive the same Holy Spirit that clothed Jesus during His earthly ministry?
5. What three words or phrases does Jesus use to describe how we will receive the Holy Spirit? What strikes you about these words?
6. Note to leader: we will be clothed (Luke 24:49), we will be baptised (Acts 1:5), we will receive power (Acts 1:8) ie be empowered.
7. Throughout both Luke and Acts, Luke presents a picture of the Holy Spirit primarily as one who comes to empower His people for the purpose of the Great Commission and to bear witness (Acts 1:8 and Luke 24:47–48). What does it mean for you as an individual and us as a group that the primary purpose for the Spirit’s coming is to be our great partner in carrying out the mission of God, empowering us to be witnesses for Jesus?

**SHARE YOUR STORY**

* Share any significant past experiences you have had of the Holy Spirit at work in your life.
* In what ways would you like to receive authority and power from the Holy Spirit?
* In what areas of your life could you partner more with the Holy Spirit? What could this look like? What could it lead to?

**PRAY TOGETHER**

Take the time to invite the Holy Spirit. Perhaps begin with prayers of worship and thanksgiving, then you may choose to follow these suggestions for specific prayer:

You could pray:

* and thank Jesus for His promise of Luke 11:13, ‘how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’
* for a fresh empowering from God
* for individual callings and for the Great Commission – that we would be faithful and obedient and always seeking help from the Holy Spirit
* for all that we have learnt over the last few weeks, and that we will continue to know Jesus, more and more.

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