

Getting Started

Introductions

Set up circle and pocket chart with story graphic. Post Activity List. Briefly introduce Circlekeepers (names and church affiliation), class (state its purpose), and theme of current story series.

Opening: The Story

Light candle, sing “Listen to the Word,” tell last week and this week’s story (John 20:1-18), pray. If available, use figures to accompany the storytelling.

Nametags, Attendance

- Pass out baggies with materials for participants to make nametags
- Take attendance, greet each participant, distribute bonus items as appropriate

Explain the Talking Piece

We’ll do different activities to learn this story; sometimes we’ll use a talking piece. The talking piece creates a space in which everyone can speak and listen in peace. Each person in the circle gets a chance to speak without being interrupted, and to listen without needing to respond.

When we are using a talking piece, here is how it works:

- 1. The talking piece is passed around the circle from person to person.**
- 2. Only the person holding the talking piece may speak.**
- 3. It is always okay to pass; just say, “I pass.”**

Check-In Round

Today our talking piece is: Mary Magdalene figure

We will use it for a check-in round; when the talking piece comes to you please...

- 1. Say your name**
- 2. Tell us how familiar you are with the story (new, heard before, could tell)**
- 3. Say a word about how you are feeling today**

I’ll go first...

Agreements Round

These are the four agreements for our time together:

- 1. Honor the talking piece—when it is being used, speak only when you are holding it**
- 2. Speak from the heart—tell your truth as you are comfortable to share**
- 3. Listen from the heart—be attentive, with a positive spirit; avoid side conversations, comments or questions.**
- 4. Protect personal privacy—Tell about God, Jesus, this class and the story we learn, but keep confidential personal information that is shared**

Any questions?

Now let us see if we can all accept these agreements: I accept these agreements...

Engaging the Story

The Word I Heard

Participants listen to story told with eyes closed, noticing what word or phrase grabs their attention.

For round, participants name their word or phrase; Circlekeeper prints it on a colored card and passes card around Circle for participant to place in Circle. Summarize by reading each card slowly.

Repeat-After-Me

Standing in the Circle, participants repeat the words and gestures of the Circlekeeper who tells the story energetically.

I Wonder Round

Starting with the Circlekeeper, participants ask questions they have about the story or name something the story inspires them to wonder about.

Circlekeeper prints each question/wondering on an index card, which is passed around the Circle to the person who spoke it, who then places it in the Circle.

Do a second round where everyone has a chance to address any one question/wondering.

About the Story

Circlekeeper gives background information to help the participants listen to the story in its original context. Examples: Mary Magdalene (review); who might have taken Jesus (grave robbers, family members, followers); gender dynamics in ancient world regarding proclamation. See Background Info page.

Act It Out

Pass out stories. Have women ID characters in John 20:1-18. Write each on a label. Ask for volunteers to be the character.

Those who do not have a "speaking part" can be disciples at the end of the story.

Ask for a volunteer to read last weeks story, and another to read this week's. Instruct them to prompt the characters with their lines if they need it (they probably will).

Connections Rounds

Each person has an opportunity to respond to possible connections between the story and their life experience. Connection topics are named by the Circlekeeper.

- **Tell about a time you wept with grief**
- **Tell a memory of celebrating Easter**

Closing: The Story

After Connections round, story is told again; participants are encouraged to listen to the story keeping in mind the connections they have spoken aloud or have made in silence, allowing the story to hold their life experience in a sacred space.

Winding Up

Check-Out and Feedback Round

Invite participants to:

- 1. Give a word or phrase that describes how they are feeling now (at the end of the Circle session).*
- 2. Give feedback on the Circle session.*

Prayer and Visitation Requests

If your church has a prayer ministry that has agreed to pray for your circle participants, now is the time to tell about that and have them fill out prayer cards.

If you are able to make one-on-one visits, this is also the time to announce that as a possibility; suggest they write “request visit” on their card.

Collection

Gather all the items in the Circle and those passed out which need to be returned.

Blessing & Dismissal

Standing in the Circle, conclude with prayer and/or song such as “Go Now in Peace.”