



Called by Name
ISAIAH 43:1

Lesson Truth: *God calls Mary's name in the midst of her confusion, recognition and renewal at the time of Christ's resurrection.*

Bible Verse: *Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine.*

—Isaiah 43:1 NRSV

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Women's Bible Study: Confusion, Recognition, Renewal

Opening Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, thank you for calling us each by name to be your children. Be with us throughout our time together, as we study your Word and learn more about the wonders of your love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Opening Thoughts: How often do we stand before God and wonder where he is? Does he really know my name? Does he know my joy and pain? We are going to explore God's knowledge of each one of our names and his desire to call us to him daily. We will learn how he called Mary's name in the midst of her confusion, recognition and renewal at the time of Christ's resurrection. God calls each of us, regardless of ability, and knows each of us by name. Whether we are old or young, use a wheelchair or our feet to move around, we are called by name and God knows us.

Confusion: Read John 20:11-13

Mary went to the tomb to look for her Lord Jesus and he was gone; she was confused. Even though Jesus had told Mary the grave could not keep him, she cried and was uncertain.

Where had they put her Lord?

Even though Christ had told Mary what would happen to his body after death, her first reaction was doubt. She wondered what trick had been played on her and the other disciples.

Think about *confusion and doubt*.

- **How often do we doubt others? Why?**
- **How often do we doubt the abilities of others? Why?**
- **How often do we doubt our Lord's promises? Why?**
- **How hard is it to fully trust Christ in the midst of confusion?**

Recognition: Read John 20:14-16

Mary saw the risen Christ with her own eyes and yet, she was still confused. She thought he was the gardener.

Where had they taken her Lord?

Only when Jesus spoke her name did Mary know her Lord. Jesus called her by name, "Mary." She recognized him; her Lord was alive!

Read John 10:3

Think about the word *recognition*.

- **Have you ever felt desperate—a place of pleading and anxiety?**
- **Have you ever felt helpless or in a situation you were not expecting?**
- **Did you search for Jesus in the midst of this desperation or helplessness?**
- **Did you see Jesus standing with you?**
- **If so, when did you recognize his presence?**
- **What may get in the way of recognizing Christ?**

Our Lord Jesus is always present with us, even if we cannot recognize him. He never leaves our side, just like he never left Mary. Christ calls our name in the waters of baptism, and claims us as his own. We are no longer bound by sin or shame. Christ's blood has washed us clean and we are forgiven. Christ calls our name, and we know his voice because we belong to him.

Renewal: Read John 20:17-18

Mary moved from confusion to recognition to renewal.

They could not defeat my Lord. He has risen!

Mary is renewed; she understands Jesus rose from the grave, just as he said he would. Mary's excitement and relief show as she proclaims, "I have seen Jesus!"

Think about the word *renewal*.

- **Have you ever felt a sense of renewal—a new sense of beginning or peace?**
- **Did this sense of renewal follow a major event in your life?**
- **Did your chance at renewal involve prayer or forgiveness?**
- **Do you recognize Christ now since you've been renewed?**
- **Where do you look for Christ when you are in need of renewal?**
- **How can you lead others to renewal when they are depressed or helpless?**
- **How can you empower others to lean on Jesus for support?**
- **What can you do in your congregation to ensure all people can know Christ and find renewal in him?**

We can find renewal in God's Word (the Bible) and sacraments (baptism, communion). When we read God's Word, we are reminded how much God loves and cares for us. Through *Holy Baptism*, we are called by name to belong to God and become a member of his family. During *Holy Communion*, we are forgiven of our sins and renewed in faith. Once renewed, we can go and tell others about Jesus and his gifts of forgiveness and eternal life in heaven. We can proclaim to others, "They could not defeat my Lord. He has risen!"

Closing Thoughts: Everyone has moments of confusion, recognition, and renewal in their life, just as Mary did after Jesus' resurrection. Whether we are old or young, use a wheelchair or our two feet to get to where we are going, we are called by name through each of those moments. Jesus is with us and we belong to him. He also gives us opportunities to point others towards him in life's moments of confusion, recognition, and renewal, regardless of ability; we are all called by name.

Closing Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to save us from our sins. Help us hear his voice and heed his call when he calls each of us by name. Be with us as we point others to his unfailing and everlasting love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.