**Easter Skit for IWC Main Event, April 2023**

Colorado Springs, Colorado

(Skit written by Laura Spinella, wrap-up written by Debbie Halverson; discussion questions were a joint effort.)

(There is a PowerPoint with 15 slides, compiled by Debbie Halverson, to go with this skit.)

Introduction of characters:

Mary Magdalene: **Mag** Joanna: **Jo**, a follower

Mary, mother of Christ: **Mom** Rebecca, the new friend: **Becca**

Ladies gathering.

**Mag**: Friends, meet my new friend Rebecca. I met her today at the market. When I told her that I am a follower of Jesus, she wanted to hear more of his story. Can you all help me share with her?

**Becca**: Is it true that all of you knew Jesus? I've been hearing many things about him but I have not been able to sort it all out.

**Mag**: This lady is Mary, the mother of Jesus! She knew him from the beginning!  And this is Joanna, who also traveled with Jesus.

**Becca**: Nice to meet all of you. So, can I ask, how did you come to know Jesus?

**Mag**: I came to know Jesus when he cast seven demons out of me. Before that time, I was living a desperate life, tormented at all times by the demons in me. I experienced severe depression, and I was unable to take care of myself. I was totally hopeless. But the day Jesus cast out those demons everything changed, and I knew that I wanted to be near this man who was so kind and so pure, who loved me in spite of my brokenness and who showed me the heart of God.

**Jo**: I met Jesus later, after he had already developed a following. When I heard his teaching and saw the miracles he performed, I was convinced he was from God. So, I became a follower as well, and traveled with the others who were following him as often as I could.

**Becca**: What was it like to travel with Jesus?

**Mom**: (Slide #1) It was always an adventure. Of course, for me the adventure started before his birth, with an angel telling me he would be born, even though I was a virgin! Then there was the trip to Bethlehem with Joseph, the man I was pledged to marry, while I was pregnant. Then the visit of shepherds the night he was born. A couple years later a small band of wise men, or magi, came from a great distance and brought gifts worthy of a king. They were astrologists and said a great star had led them to us. Because of their study of the stars, they were convinced that our baby was a great king. Imagine that---the king born in a stable with animals!

**Mag**: I love hearing you tell about those early years, before any of us had met Jesus. For me, traveling with Jesus was such a joy! But it was more than a joy. I felt compelled to follow him because I knew that I owed him my very life. Before I knew him, I was an outcast. And even after he cast out the demons, I knew that apart from him I would be helpless and hopeless and full of despair. Living in his presence brought me hope and peace.

**Jo**: I loved being part of his band of followers. (Slide #2) Growing up in Judea, I had seen many rabbis, religious scholars who trained young men to also be scholars. They were so proud because of their great learning. And they could also be harsh, and they didn't really care about the people they were trying to lead. But Jesus, he was so different! So humble. So kind. He knew so much about God, even though he never underwent the training to become a rabbi in their system. And he showed us the power of God through his miracles.

**Becca**: Please tell me more about the miracles!

**Mom**: People talk about all these miracles, how he healed so many people and cast out demons. He even raised Lazarus from the dead! But I saw God at work in him as he grew from a baby to a man. I saw him grow in the knowledge of God. God's Spirit was teaching him! Already by the time he was 12 years old, he was able to challenge the thinking of the greatest scholars in Israel! His knowledge of God did not come from human teachers!

**Jo**: (Slide #3) One of my favorite miracles was when Jesus healed a woman from a flow of blood. She was just a poor woman, and so timid and tired and beaten down. But in her desperation, she touched the corner of Jesus's robe and was healed. She wanted to sneak away unnoticed, but Jesus wanted to talk to her, and he commended her for her faith. So many of his miracles showed how much he valued women.

That was very different from the religious leaders of the day!

**Becca**: Yes, he does sound very different from all the rabbis I have seen. Did people love him or hate him? Why would someone hate a man like that, who did so much good?

**Mom**: (Slide #4) There were always those who loved him. After all, he healed and fed and forgave so many people. He exuded life and peace and knowledge of God. And he never exalted himself, but only his heavenly Father. But this kind of teaching was very offensive to the religious leaders. If they accepted his teaching, they would have to humble themselves. They were unwilling to give up their high status. In fact, they were willing to kill in order to preserve their high status! I think they were also jealous of how many people were following him and his teachings.

**Becca**:  So, how is it that he ended up being crucified? How could the leaders crucify someone that the people loved so much? Did he actually commit a crime?

**Jo**: It is hard to understand. (Slide #5) One week before his death, people were welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem as king. Jesus rode in on the colt of a donkey, not on a majestic horse!  People were lining the streets with palm branches and with clothes to prepare the way for him. They were shouting, "Hallelujah! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

Then came the Great Passover feast. After eating the feast with his disciples, Jesus took them to a garden to pray. (Slide #6) It was there that a group of soldiers came to arrest Jesus. Jesus had been betrayed by one of his disciples!

**Mag**: The amazing thing is that he had even told his disciples that he knew one of them would betray him. But he did nothing to stop it!

**Jo**: (Slide #7) So the soldiers took him away for a trial. They brought him to Pilate, who found nothing wrong with Jesus. But Pilate still had him whipped and allowed his soldiers to torment Jesus. Then they brought him to the Jewish leaders for their trial. The only crime the Jewish leaders could claim was that he said he was the Son of God. By law, they were not allowed to kill him themselves, so they brought him back to Pilate.

**Mag**: Pilate wanted to release Jesus because he could see that this was all about some "religious dispute," but the Jewish leaders stirred up the crowds. They stood outside the gates and yelled, "Crucify him!" How could they be so fickle? They applauded him as king and then one week later called for his death!

**Mom**: But it was all part of God's plan. Jesus had told his disciples many times that he would be killed and would rise again 3 days later. But the disciples could never quite understand what he was telling them. None of us did.

**Mag**: That's because we were expecting the Messiah to become a king on earth and deliver us from Roman oppression.

**Mom**: But there's a prophecy in our Jewish holy book that was written around 700 years before Jesus was even born. It described how the chosen one would face punishment for crimes that he did not commit. It said this: "He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquity. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed.”

**Becca:** What are stripes?

**Mom:** You know, the wounds on his back from the lashes of the whip!

**Jo**: But back to the story of that night. He was mocked. He was beaten. (Slide #8) They put a crown of thorns on his head. The next morning, when Pilate sent him to be crucified, Jesus was forced to carry his own cross. But he was so weak, from all the beating and the loss of blood, that another man was forced to help him carry it.

**Mag**: (Slide #9) He was crucified together with two other men who were criminals. As if he were criminal too!

**Mom**: My heart was being torn out! How could I stand there and watch my son, who I knew to be the son of God, be killed by evil men?

**Mag**: We all stood at the cross. Most of the disciples had fled. Only John was there with us. People were sneering and mocking. They put up a sign that said, "The King of the Jews." And people made fun of that, too!

**Jo**: It was amazing to see how he suffered so profoundly, in incredible pain and anguish, but he did not fight it. He didn't curse his tormenters. He knew it was God's will for him.

**Mag**: He even forgave those who were mocking, hurting, and killing him. He said, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”

**Jo**: He watched as they gambled to divide up his clothing. At one point he said, "My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?"

**Mom**: As he hung on the cross, gasping for breath, and the end was approaching, the sky became terribly dark, even though it was still the middle of the day. Finally, he said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit,” and breathed his last breath.

**Mag**: And right at that moment there was a huge earthquake! We all fell to the ground.

**Jo**: And the Roman centurion who was standing there watching said, "Surely, this man was the son of God.”

**Mom**: (Slide #10) We did not know it at the time, but later that day we heard that the huge curtain in the temple that separated the most holy place from the part where the common people could be admitted, that curtain had been torn into two pieces from top to bottom. Top to bottom! Because God himself had torn it! God was showing that He was opening the way for common people to know Him directly!

**Jo**: But at the time we only experienced the earthquake. We didn't know about the torn curtain until later. So, we stood there watching as Jesus was lowered from the cross. Two of his secret followers, who were rich religious men, had gotten permission to take his body. They wrapped it in pieces of linen cloth with spices, (Slide #11) and then placed his body in a new tomb that had been dug in a wall of rock. Finally, they rolled a large stone over the entrance to the tomb.

**Mag**:  Jo and I followed Jesus' body to the tomb. Then we left to prepare sweet smelling spices to put on the body after the Sabbath was over.

**Mom**:  That night was a night of despair and anguish for all of us. We clung to each other and cried. Our hopes had been dashed. We had come to believe that Jesus was the son of God. Now he was destroyed and defeated. The kingdom we had hoped for had not been established. Or so we thought.

**Jo**: The religious leaders had heard Jesus talk about rising from the dead. (Slide #12) So, the next day they went to Pilate and requested that he post guards at the grave to ensure that no one would steal the body and claim that Jesus had been resurrected. Pilate granted their request, and soldiers were sent to seal and guard the grave.

**Mag**: On the day after the Sabbath, just after sunrise, a large group of us ladies went to the tomb bringing spices for Jesus's body. (Slide #13) As we got there, we saw an angel of the Lord come from the sky, and there was a huge earthquake! The angel went to the tomb and rolled the stone away from the entrance. Then he sat on top of the stone. The angel was shining as bright as lightning. His clothes were as white as snow. The soldiers guarding the tomb were afraid of the angel. They shook with fear and then became like dead men! The angel said to us, “Don't be afraid. I know you were looking for Jesus, the one who was killed on the cross, but he is not here. He has risen from the dead, as he said he would. Come and see the place where his body was.”

**Jo**: We went into the tomb, and the body was gone! As we stood there wondering about it, two men in shining clothes came and stood beside us. We were so afraid we fell on the ground. But the men said to us, “Why are you looking for a living person here? This is a place for dead people. Jesus is not here. He has risen from the dead. Do you remember what he said in Galilee? He said, ‘The son of Man must be handed over to the control of sinful men, be killed on a cross, and rise from the dead on the third day.’’’ The angel sent us to tell the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead.

**Mag**: But I stayed by the grave, crying, and asking the angels where they had put the body. Before I returned to the others that day, Jesus himself appeared to me.

**Jo**: And over the next few days, he appeared to all of us. (Slide #14) He appeared to the disciples as they sat in a locked room, and to two followers as they walked along the road.

**Mag**:  And then to a large group of us who were gathered together for a meal.

**Jo**: Jesus continued appearing to different followers for a period of 40 days. At the end of that time, (Slide #15) his disciples stood with him and saw him float up into heaven. At that time, two angels stood with us and told us, “You saw Jesus carried away from you into heaven. He will come back in the same way you saw him go.”

**Mom**: And so, God really did fulfill the promises he made to me before Jesus's birth! He truly was the son of God, who came to show us the way to have peace with God.

**IWC Leader:**

To wrap up, I want to briefly talk about why Jesus had to die, and what his resurrection means to us—what difference does it make?

Jesus, who was both man and God, lived a perfect life here on earth. That qualified him to pay the punishment (which is death) for humanity’s pride and rebellion against God. God wants to have a loving relationship with us, but the price for our pride and rebellion against God had to be paid.

But it doesn’t end there with Jesus’ death! Because he rose from the dead, we have evidence that there is life after death. If we confess our pride and rebellion against God, and accept his free gift of forgiveness, we can be sure of having eternal life with a loving God!

In addition to that, Jesus told his disciples that while we are still alive here on earth, he will send his Holy Spirit to live within us to guide us and to give us inner peace and joy. What could be better than guidance from God, peace and joy in our hearts now, and eternal life with God after we die?! Knowing that I can have a relationship with a loving God both now and forever is what has given my life meaning and hope.

One of the most important verses in the Bible is found in the book of John, chapter 3, verse 16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.”

If you would like to receive this free gift of eternal life, or if you have some questions, please talk to one of our leaders, or write it on the prayer card at your table. We would love to talk with you about this!

There are some discussion questions at your tables. Let’s take a few minutes to talk about them.

**Table Discussion Questions**

(Table leader: You may choose questions that are most relevant to your group)

1. Who were some of the reliable witnesses who knew that Jesus really died?
2. How did the authorities make sure that there would be no talk of Jesus’ resurrection? Why was that important to them?
3. Did you notice anything new about Jesus’ death and resurrection in this skit?
4. What stood out to you?
5. What do you imagine these women gave up in order to follow Jesus? Did it cost them anything socially, family-wise, financially, or physically?
6. What do you think the women gained from following Jesus?
7. How do you think people’s lives were changed after seeing Jesus alive, after he had died and was buried?