



# SUNDAY SCHOOL April 5, 2026

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Old Testament:

None this week

Gospel: Matthew 28:1-9

*Context: After the grief and silence of the crucifixion, a small group of women go to the tomb at dawn—expecting death, but encountering something entirely unexpected.*

#### THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men.

But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.”

So, they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples.

Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!”

And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him.

#### OVERVIEW

Matthew 28:1–9 tells the first moments of the resurrection discovery. Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” go to the tomb. An earthquake occurs, an angel appears, the stone is rolled away, and the guards are paralyzed with fear. The angel tells the women that Jesus is risen and instructs them to go tell the disciples. As they leave, Jesus himself meets them.

This passage moves from **grief** → **fear** → **revelation** → **mission** → **encounter**.

#### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

##### **Immediately Before (Matthew 27:57–66)**

Jesus has been buried. The tomb is sealed, and guards are posted by order of the religious leaders, who fear the disciples might steal the body and claim resurrection.

**Key idea:** The authorities try to *control the narrative*—to make resurrection impossible.



### Immediately After (Matthew 28:10–20)

- Jesus reassures the women (“Do not be afraid”)
- The guards are bribed to spread a false story
- The Great Commission is given
- **Key idea:** Two competing responses emerge:
  - Truth proclaimed
  - Truth suppressed

### Broader Narrative of Gospel of Matthew

Matthew consistently presents Jesus as:

- The fulfillment of prophecy
- The true King (contrasting earthly authority)
- “God with us” (Emmanuel)

The resurrection is the **ultimate validation** of everything Jesus taught:

- The Kingdom of Heaven is real
- Death is not the final authority
- God’s power operates differently than human systems

### HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

This moment sits inside a tense political-religious environment:

- Judea is under Roman Empire control
- Local authority is shared with Jewish religious leaders (Sanhedrin)
- Crucifixion is a Roman tool to suppress rebellion

The sealing of the tomb reflects:

- Fear of unrest
- Desire to maintain order
- Anxiety about Jesus’ influence even after death

The resurrection claim is not just theological—it is **politically disruptive**:

- It challenges Roman power (death is their ultimate weapon)
- It challenges religious authority (they declared Jesus a blasphemer)

### HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **c. 30–33 AD** – Crucifixion and resurrection
- Early morning, first day of the week (Sunday)
- Written in the Greek likely between **70–90 AD**

This places the writing:

- After the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD)
- During a time when early Christians are defining identity under pressure



## BIBLE TRANSLATION UNDERSTANDING

### Original Language

- Written in **Greek**
- Audience: mixed Jewish and Gentile Christians

### Key Greek Words & Nuances

- **“Do not be afraid”**
  - Not just “calm down”
  - Means: ***Stop living in fear; shift your orientation***
- **“He has risen”**
  - Passive verb: *“He was raised”*
  - Implies **God’s action**, not just Jesus’ self-resurrection
- **“Go quickly”**
  - ***Carries urgency: truth is not meant to sit still***

### Translation Layers

- From:
  - Early manuscripts → Latin Vulgate (Jerome)
  - → King James Version (1611)
  - → Modern translations (NIV, NRSV, ESV)
- Some translations emphasize:
  - “He is risen” (result)
  - Others: “He has been raised” (divine action)
- That subtle shift influences theology:
  - Resurrection as **event**
  - vs. Resurrection as **God’s ongoing act**

## SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Scholars often read this passage not only as a historical claim, but as a **pattern of transformation**:

### 1. The Tomb as Finality

Represents:

- Systems we think are permanent
- Situations that feel sealed and guarded

In modern life:

- Loss, addiction, division, economic hardship

In Grant County:

- Decline of local industry
- Loss of community identity
- Fractures in trust (media, institutions, even church dynamics)



## 2. The Stone Rolled Away

Not to let Jesus out—but to let us see in

Metaphor: Reality is bigger than what we assumed was “finished”

## 3. The Women as First Witnesses

In a culture where women’s testimony held little legal weight: God chooses **unexpected voices**

Modern parallel:

- Truth often comes from overlooked places
- Not always from institutions or authority figures

## 4. Fear and Joy Together

The women leave “with fear and great joy”

This is deeply human:

- Transformation is unsettling
- Hope can feel risky

## 5. Meeting Jesus “On the Way”

They don’t meet Him at the tomb—they meet Him **in motion**

Metaphor: Understanding comes after obedience, not before

### HOW SHOULD WE ACT AND REACT TO THIS SCRIPTURE TODAY?

- **Expect Life Where We Assume Finality** – Don’t accept “this is just how things are”
- **Move, Even When You Don’t Fully Understand** – Faith is often directional, not informational
- **Listen to Unexpected Voices** – Especially in your community
- **Hold Fear and Joy Together** – Growth often feels like both
- **Tell What You’ve Seen** – The women’s first act is sharing, not debating

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Why do you think the women were the first to witness the resurrection?*
2. *What “sealed tombs” exist in our lives or community today?*
3. *Why do you think fear and joy appear together in this story?*
4. *What does it mean that Jesus meets them “on the way”?*
5. *How do we see competing “truth narratives” today, similar to the guards’ story vs. the women’s testimony?*
6. *If resurrection represents new life, what might that look like in Grant County right now?*



## ADDENDUM

### WHAT THE BIBLE SHOWS US ABOUT PRAYER

Where there are references in the Bible:

- Matthew 6:5–13 → simple, not performative
- Romans 8:26 → when we don't know what to say
- Psalm 13 → honesty and emotion
- Luke 18:1–8 → keep showing up
- Luke 22:42 → trust beyond outcome
- Matthew 14:30 → simple cries count

*Attached is a laminated Card. This isn't something to study. It's something to use... especially when you don't feel like you know how."*



# How to Pray

## When Words are Hard

Feel it, don't Recite it or feel you need to use Church-Speak

**Prayer doesn't have to be perfect—it just has to be honest. Start by telling God what you're feeling, even if it's confusion or fear. Name the people on your heart. Say what you hope for, even if you're unsure. Admit what you don't understand. Then place them in God's care and trust that you don't have to carry it alone. Amen.**

Possible Path to Walk (not Steps to Pray)

### 1. Start Honest (Not Polished)

Before anything else, just tell God the truth.

"God, I don't even know how to pray right now."

"This scares me."

"I don't understand why this is happening."

God is not grading prayers. There is no "right tone."

### 2. Name the People (Out Loud or in Your Heart)

Bring the person into the space.

"I'm thinking about \_\_\_\_"

"And his family."

There's something grounding about simply *naming*.

### 3. Say What You Want (Even If You're Not Sure You Should)

This is where people hesitate the most.

Give them permission.

*"I want healing."*

*"I want relief."*

*"I want more time."*

You can even say: *"I don't know if this is right to ask... but this is what I hope."*

That honesty matters more than theological precision.



#### 4. Acknowledge What You Don't Know

This is the turning point from control → trust.

*"I don't understand how this works."*

*"I don't know what the outcome should be."*

*This keeps prayer from becoming a transaction.*

#### 5. Place Them in God's Care (Release, Not Resignation)

Not giving up—just not carrying it alone.

*"Hold them."*

*"Be near to them."*

*"Give them peace... whatever comes."*

*This is where prayer shifts from fixing to presence.*

#### 6. Close Simply (No Performance Needed)

No need to wrap it up with perfect language.

*"Amen."*

Or even just *silence*.

### Additional Thoughts:

Jesus gave us *a way* to pray, not *words we're trapped in*. The Lord's Prayer is a model—it starts with relationship, moves through need, and ends in trust. What we're doing here is the same thing... just in our own words.

Prayer is not about choosing the *correct outcome*.

It's about bringing your **heart fully into God's presence**.

***"God, I pray for healing... and I trust you with whatever comes."***

