

## Getting Started

### Introductions

*Set up circle and pocket chart with story graphic.*

*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, participants repeat the words and gestures of the Circlekeeper telling story.*

### **Fill in the Blank**

*Leader reads story one line at a time, omitting a key word which group fills in.*

### **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 week's 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**

### **My Story in God's Story**

*After the Connections round, the story is told again; participants are encouraged to listen to the story keeping in mind the connections they spoke aloud or 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.*

### **Closing**

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