

Apr 19, 2026 Leader's Guide

John 21:1-14 We Believe He Rose Again

In the weeks between Easter and Ascension Sunday, the church lingers in the reality of the resurrection. These are the forty days when Jesus appeared to his disciples, meeting them, restoring them, grounding them in the truth that he is alive, and speaking to them about his coming kingdom. As a community, we're stepping into those moments together, looking at these resurrection appearances not simply to affirm that Jesus rose again, but to see what resurrection life actually looks like. Because these encounters aren't just proofs to be examined, they're invitations to be received. Invitations to live now as a foretaste of the kingdom his resurrection guarantees.

Read John 21:1–14

1. What stands out to you in the details of this story? What feels unnecessary—or oddly specific? (vv. 1–11)

Invite your group to notice the “texture” of the passage—details like Peter getting dressed before jumping in, or the 153 fish. These don't advance the plot but carry the weight of eyewitness memory. Help them see that John isn't writing abstract theology—he's grounding resurrection in lived, remembered experience. The goal isn't to force belief, but to invite openness to the reality of the risen Jesus.

2. The disciples are simply described as “together.” Why is that more significant than it first appears? (v. 2)

Draw out how unlikely this community is—different personalities, backgrounds, instincts. This isn't natural compatibility; it's something being held together. Help the group reflect on how resurrection creates a new kind of community—not curated, but received. We tend to curate community drifting toward those who look like us, think like us, experience Jesus like us. You might press gently: where do we tend to curate rather than receive?

3. How does being in a diverse community actually help us know Jesus more fully?

Bring in the C.S. Lewis insight—there are dimensions of Jesus we will not see on our own. Invite participants to consider: has someone different from you ever helped you see Jesus more clearly? This reframes difference from obstacle to gift. Encourage leaders to move this from theory into lived experience.

Read Luke 5:1–11

4. As you compare Luke 5 and John 21, what similarities do you notice? What feels like it's “happening again”?

Help the group slow down and name the parallels: long night with no fish, Jesus' instruction, miraculous catch, the same people in the boat. Let them feel the déjà vu before interpreting it. This is about recognizing patterns in how Jesus meets his people—he often works in familiar ways that call us to remember.

5. Compare Peter's response in Luke 5 to his response in John 21. What has changed—and why?

In Luke 5, Peter recoils in fear (“Depart from me...”). Here, he runs toward Jesus—can't get to him fast enough. This is the heart of the sermon: resurrection doesn't just convince the mind—it reorients the heart. Even after denial and failure, Peter moves toward Jesus. Invite honesty: do you tend to recoil or run? What does that reveal about how you see Jesus?

6. What do these differences teach us about dependence on Jesus in our own lives?

Press into the “listen to me” thread. In both stories, everything turns on obedience to Jesus' word—but how easily we default to our own wisdom. Invite reflection: where are you relying on your own instincts rather than seeking and trusting his voice? What might it look like to bring even small decisions to him?

7. At the end of the passage, Jesus doesn't give them a task—he invites them to a meal. Why does that matter? (vv. 12–13)

Land the movement of the sermon: from doing to being. “Run to me, listen to me, be with me.” Mission, community, and kingdom life flow from relationship, not the other way around. Invite the group to reflect practically: what does it look like for you this week to simply be with Jesus—not just do for him?