

Holy Week

**AN EASTER WEEK READING PLAN THROUGH
THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, SUNDAY TO SUNDAY,
INCLUDING FAMILY ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS.**

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HOLY
WEEK

Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday (Read John 12:12-18)

“Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” John 12:13a

On the Sunday before Passover, Jesus knew it was the time and the hour for Him to enter Jerusalem and live out the last days of his earthly life. The story is recorded in several Gospels, and in the gospel of John it comes just after Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anoints Jesus for burial and wipes His feet with her hair, a precious story of worship which alerts us to what is to come. (See John 12:1-11) On that Sunday that we now know as “Palm Sunday” a great crowd accompanied Jesus on His trip. They hailed him as King and shouted “Hosanna” which is a transliteration of the Hebrew word meaning “save now.” They were expecting a powerful King who would save them from their suffering under Roman rule. Little did they know that Jesus would save them from so much more. On that day with joy and exuberant praise they waved palm branches and shouted “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” Most of them did not yet understand that Jesus WAS the Lord, and that He would have to die in order to save them from their sins. As you begin to meditate of the events of Holy Week, take time to celebrate what you know to be true—Jesus is the One who saves us! Wave those palm branches and shout Hosanna, because you know that Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords saves you!

Family Activity: Act out the story of Palm Sunday! Cut some branches from a tree or bush in your yard and make a Hosanna pathway that goes through part of your yard or home. Mix the branches with jackets or blankets if you like, then walk the pathway together as a family shouting Hosanna and singing your favorite praise song (carry along your phone and click on the song to sing along with). When you get to the end of your path sit down together as a family and talk about what it might have been like to be among the crowd the day Jesus entered Jerusalem. Talk about the emotions and joy of that day and the meaning of the word Hosanna. Finish up with a family prayer time.



HOLY
WEEK

Monday

Monday (Read John 12:20-50)

“So Jesus said to them, ‘For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.’ These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.” “I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.” John 12:35-36, & 46 (NASB 1995)

As Jesus ends His public ministry, He gives His last public appeal emphasizing that people should not waste any more time but turn from unbelief to faith. He predicts His death and says clearly that the hour has come for Him, the Son of Man, to be glorified. This stirs up the crowd to the point that He hides for a time. It seems that Jesus hid Himself because the crowd was not believing in Him. This was prophesied in Isaiah and fulfilled that day! It doesn't say how long He hid because He continues to speak about Himself being the Light. He wanted them to realize that they were living in darkness and that He was the Light of the world! Believing in the light makes us sons and daughters of the light. We have the privilege of reflecting His light to those around us who stumble in darkness. Let's be light as we witness through our words and in our deeds. Let's not remain in darkness nor let those we know remain in darkness. How can you let Jesus shine His light through you today?

Family Activity: Together as a family or individually, withdraw to a dark, quiet place and “hide” from all the distractions of your world. Try to walk in the dark without running into things. Bring out a flashlight and spend some time meditating on or discussing as a family the meaning of Jesus' words in this passage, who He is as the Light of the world and how you can be children of the light.



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Tuesday



Tuesday (Read John 13:1-17)

“Jesus...poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet...” John 13:5a

Jesus and the disciples gathered in an upper room to celebrate the Passover. Jesus already knew what was ahead, and who would betray Him, but “knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.” (John 13:3) At this time, He demonstrated His great love by preparing what he needed, and began to wash the disciples’ feet. Jesus did not wait for someone else to do this task. He saw a need and chose to fulfill it. Jesus also did not discriminate between the people at the table. He did not choose to wash the feet of only his favorite, or not wash Judas’ feet because He knew Judas would betray Him. (John 13:11) Jesus showed the same care and service for each person in attendance. Most importantly, Jesus served in a way that could not be paid back. His service was an act of love only. He was not looking for recognition, or felt that He was owed some sort of payment.

Sometimes a demonstration of love is hard to receive. Touching our feet allows someone else to see the dirty calloused part of ourselves. Jesus not only saw this part of them, but he touched this part of them. We don’t like being so transparent to others. We want to appear “clean and smooth”. Yet Jesus did not get irritated at their shying away, or demand that He be able to serve. He made it clear that he was serving because He loved them, with no judgment. He was also not deterred by touching their dirty feet. He saw them for who they were - people created in God’s image, and loved by Him.

Family Activity: Set up a foot washing station with towels and a basin and as a family wash each other’s feet. Talk about how the disciples must have felt when Jesus washed their feet and what they said. How do you feel as you do this together as a family? Share how you have seen your family members serve others selflessly. Possibly continue this for the rest of the week. Maybe write down each service that is noted and share on Easter with the whole family.

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Wednesday



Wednesday (Read John 13:18-38)

“As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” John 13:34b

Although Jesus didn't have a degree in psychology or a bachelor's in criminal justice, His ability to investigate the heart and mind makes him the perfect criminal profiler. Jesus was fully conscious of those whose mind and heart would believe Him, and the one who would betray Him. Still, He was not motivated by self-protection. In John 6, Jesus hand picks 12 men to be His closest friends, one of them being Judas Iscariot. We aren't told much about Judas' motivation. We infer that his faulty expectation of Christ and personal ambition kept him from believing and compelled him to be an opportunist, thief, and betrayer. Despite knowing this, Jesus chose a friendship with Judas. We know what happens. After three years of ministry together, Jesus sends Judas out to seal the deal and betray Him.

After Judas leaves, Jesus gives His disciples a new command: Love one another as I have loved you. This is how people will know you belong to me. This expands on what was said in Leviticus 19:18b. Here Jesus nominates Himself as the example of how to love. How does Jesus love us? He suffered and sacrificed everything and opened the door to forgiveness. How did Jesus love Judas? The same way. Jesus suffered for everyone, for you and for me. Judas chose to not walk through the door, but Jesus offered it. Has someone betrayed or hurt you? What would holding an open door to forgiveness in that relationship look like? Will it be painful for you? Might it cost you something? I don't need to give my own example of this kind of love. Jesus perfectly demonstrates this Himself!

Family Activity: Hold a simple family communion service, reading Scripture, dipping bits of bread in grape juice, asking forgiveness and committing to love one another as Jesus commanded.



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Thursday



Thursday (Read Matthew 26: 17-19, 26-30)

“Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, “The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.” Matthew 26:18

The Last Supper was actually the last Passover that Jesus shared with His disciples. Passover was the celebration of the time when God delivered the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. The story of the Passover is significant as it is commanded and mentioned numerous times in Scripture that the people of Israel should celebrate and remember God’s mighty deliverance. (Exodus 12:17-27 and Deuteronomy 16:1-3)

The tradition of the Passover in ancient times was to sacrifice a lamb to represent the sins of Israel and to make atonement for them, so that the angel of death would pass over them. The blood of the lamb was then put on the doorposts and lintels of the homes, forming a cross.

God also commanded that only unleavened bread was to be eaten, as leaven represents sin. Likewise in the New Testament, Jesus has become our Passover lamb whose death on the cross provides eternal redemption and deliverance from the bondage of sin.

(1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

The power of the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, shed on the cross, cleanses and delivers us from the bondage of sin and penalty of eternal death. “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we can serve the living God!” Hebrews 9:14. On this holy Thursday, as we celebrate the Lord’s supper, let us remember that His sacrifice is our Passover! Behold the Lamb of God!

Family Activity: Plan to eat lamb and unleavened bread as part of your family dinner meal and talk about this last Passover meal as you eat. For a more formal Passover meal, check out the resources at: chosenpeople.com and search “Passover Seder” to find how to host a Passover Seder meal.



HOLY
WEEK

Good Friday



Good Friday (Read John 18-19:37)

“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain...Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering...He was pierced for our transgressions, and he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.” Isaiah 53:3a,4a,5

What about “Good Friday” could possibly be good? It is good because God is good and this is the day that He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to die in our place so that we might have eternal life if we believe. This day was good, in fact glorious, for us. But what about for Jesus?

This is the day that Jesus walked the “Via Dolorosa,” the way of unimaginable suffering. He carried the cross that he would die on as He went, until the guards called for Simon the Cyrene to help Him. In the garden a few hours before Jesus had asked His Father if this cup could pass from Him, but the answer was no. Jesus felt forsaken, and yet His words were steadfast: “Not my will but yours,” He said, submitting to His Father. This was the only way. The Father had to turn His back on His precious Son for this moment for one purpose – to save us. It was the ultimate act of love. Jesus laid down His life willingly for us, for each of us. He died in our place, took our sins upon Himself, endured scourging, a crown of thorns pressed into his brow and a humiliation that seemed unending. While on the cross He cried out to God seven times, words of agony and yet hope – he offered words of forgiveness even while hanging there, His feet and hands nailed to the cross, holding Him up. Then, when it was just the right moment, He simply said “It is finished.” And He gave up His spirit. The sun went dark, the ground shook, the veil of the temple was torn in two. He had done what God sent Him to do. He died for you and for me.

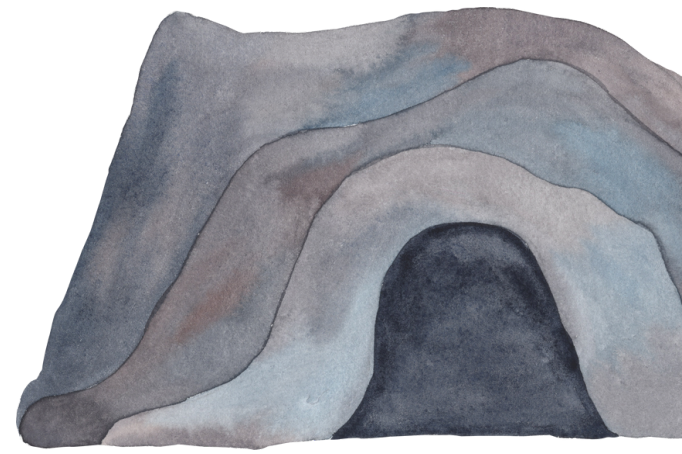
But this was not the end, in fact it was just the beginning. Next came the waiting, three agonizingly long days. What would you have been thinking if you had been walking along the Via Dolorosa with Jesus or standing there at the foot of the cross with John and Jesus’ mother, Mary?

Family Activity: Sometime on Friday take a walk, alone or with a family member. Let your mind dwell on the events of Good Friday, knowing that Easter Sunday is coming. Say a prayer of humility and gratefulness. Ask forgiveness. Commit your heart to the Savior if you have never expressed your belief before. Recommit if you have already done this. Ask Jesus to be Lord of your life – your Lord of Lords and King of Kings.



HOLY
WEEK

Saturday



Saturday (Read John 19:38-42).

“Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews’ Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.” John 19:41-42 (NKJV)

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus wished to complete their work before sundown of Sabbath Preparation Day, quickly but carefully preparing Jesus’ body with cloth strips soaked in 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes. This was a hard job that they lovingly performed. Once they laid Jesus in the tomb, they had to wait. But for exactly what, they were unsure. Could something miraculous result from the events of the past two days?

The disciples were also waiting. It was now the Sabbath and they could do nothing. Jesus was dead and buried. The future was unknown. Imagine what scenes were replaying in their minds about Jesus speaking of death and resurrection. Imagine the scene of Jesus telling Mary, upon arriving four days after Lazarus died, saying, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Was resurrection real? Was Jesus going to resurrect? Or the scene recorded by Luke in which one criminal crucified beside Jesus rebuked the other, then turned to Jesus saying, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom,” to which Jesus replied, “Assuredly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Jesus gave him hope in life after death. They heard Jesus say this, but all they could do was...Wait. Hope. Pray. Praise. Trust in the Lord and remember His promises even when life was hard. That Saturday of waiting still speaks to us to do the same.

Family Activity: Share these scriptures (Psalm 27:14, Psalm 37:5, Lamentations 3:26, Romans 12:12, Isaiah 40:31) with each person picking a related phrase below and explaining what it means: Waiting on the Lord, being of good courage, having your heart strengthened, committing your way to the Lord, trusting in the Lord, praying always.

After each person explains their phrase, all should spend 1 minute in prayer, Praising, Repenting, Asking, and Yielding (P.R.A.Y.) Then the next person explains, then all pray again, etc. In closing, sing a song about praising God in the storm and trusting Him in the waiting.

HOLY
WEEK

Resurrection Sunday

Easter Sunday (Read John 20:1-18; 31)

“I have seen the Lord!” John 20:18

Sorrow turned to joy when, on the third day from Jesus’ death and burial, His resurrection was first revealed to His friends. In John’s gospel, Mary Magdalene first realizes the tomb is no longer secure and runs to tell the disciples, Peter, and (traditionally) John. After they confirmed her story and then left her sorrowfully alone, Mary encounters Jesus as He tenderly calls her by name. Imagine her racing heart as she joyfully realizes Jesus is alive! All four gospel writers include the resurrection story. Why? Because Jesus’ resurrection conquered Satan and overcame death for those who believe that we might have life in His name (John 20:31). Jesus’ purpose in coming to earth, to pay for our sins, (John 3:16-17) was finished. His motivation was love.

As you close out your meditations of this holiest of weeks, continue the joyful celebration, and spread the love. As Mary announced, “I have seen the Lord!” go and do the same. Tell what Jesus has done for you and spread His love.

Family Activity: Bring the resurrection story into your Easter morning family activities. Make resurrection rolls, baked with a marshmallow inside that will melt as they cook and leave an empty tomb look!

