

He Is Risen!

Each year as spring comes into bloom, families and friends come together, and the world takes a break from the busyness of life to celebrate the Easter season. As Christians, this time is especially sweet for us as we come together and celebrate something far more exciting than springtime, bunnies, eggs, or candy—this is a special time set aside to celebrate the new life we have in Christ because of Jesus' death and resurrection!

The week leading up to Easter Sunday is known as Holy Week, or Passion Week. For the past 2,000 years, followers of Jesus have taken the time to celebrate Christ's sacrifice and victory over death on the cross. This guide will help you and your family walk through each day with Jesus on his way to the cross, starting with Palm Sunday and ending in the triumph over his resurrection on Easter morning. What a blessing to know the great story of God's love for us as we read Scripture together and give him all praise and glory for sending his son to die in our place. Blessings on your family as you proclaim together that HE IS RISEN and with us!

Monday

READ

Luke 15, The Parable of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Lost Son ("Running Away" in the Jesus Storybook Bible)

DISCUSS

What did the sheep, coin, and son all have in common? They were all lost. What happened once they were found? There was joy over each. The shepherd called people together to rejoice over the sheep being found, the woman rejoiced with friends when the coin was found, and the father ran towards the son to hug him and threw a party with friends to celebrate his return. Jesus told these stories to show us what God is like. God is like the shepherd who carries us on his shoulders, like the father who loves his boy. We can rejoice too, knowing that if we turn to God the same way the son returned home, God will welcome us back and rejoice over us too!

ACTIVITY

Rejoice together by throwing a "This is the Day" Party! Psalm 118:24 says, "This is the day the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it." Make a banner/poster board with this verse and have a party together rejoicing that God created us and loves us!

Tuesday

READ

Mark 14:1-9, A Sinful Woman Anoints Jesus ("Washed with Tears" in Jesus Storybook Bible)

DISCUSS

What did the woman treasure more, Jesus or her perfume? What did she care about more, what Jesus thought of her or what others thought of her? The woman didn't care about what others thought, and she values Jesus more than her costly perfume. She recognized that she was like the sheep/coin/son in yesterday's reading—she was lost. She knew she would never be good enough and needed to be rescued. She humbled herself in front of others and Jesus.

ACTIVITY

Buy a fragrance and pour some of it out into a bowl. Place it where it will fill the room (feel free to do this on a porch or patio!) and gather around for this discussion. What "precious" things could you sacrifice and give away to someone else? Come up with a plan to execute this and give yourselves away. This could be your stuff or your time. Pray for the people around you that God has placed in your life and ask him to show you how you can help meet their needs.

Wednesday

READ

John 13, The Last Supper and the Betrayal ("The Servant King" in Jesus Storybook Bible)

DISCUSS

Who usually washes peoples' feet—a master or a servant? Jesus took the role of a servant and served the disciples when he washed their feet. What did Jesus tell his disciples after washing their feet? He told them he was their example. God wants us to serve one another with a humble heart. We saw the woman wash Jesus' feet with her tears and anoint him with perfume yesterday. Humility is something God desires in us. In Philippians 2, the Bible tells us we must have the same attitude that Jesus had. He humbled himself even to death. Ask what it means to be humble. To be humble is to not be proud, to think of others more than ourselves.

ACTIVITY

Wash each other's feet. Prepare a basin with soap and water and have several towels on hand—some for washing and some for drying. Head of household should go first. Afterwards, write out some things you can do as a family to act out God's call for us to consider others' needs more important than ourselves.

Thursday

READ

Luke 22:39-55, Jesus Prays on the Eve of His Death (“A Dark Night in the Garden” in Jesus Storybook Bible)

DISCUSS

Why did Jesus go away? He went with friends to the garden so he could pray and then he went to be alone to pray and talk directly with God the Father. Jesus knew that it was time for him to die and take on the sins of the whole world. He cried out and prayed to God for any other way, but in the end he said to his Father, “I want your will to be done, not mine.” Jesus humbled himself, knowing there was no other way. He obeyed the Father as his authority and also obeyed the Roman soldiers when they came to arrest him.

ACTIVITY

Decorate a lidded can (like an old-style coffee can) and label it “God Can.” Have each person write prayer requests on slips of paper to place in the can. Explain that as Jesus prayed to the Father before his death, so also we can pray about anything on our hearts or minds. God is always listening, ready to answer. Revisit the requests regularly and discuss how God has answered your prayers.

Good Friday

READ

Mark 15:1-47, As this is a lengthy passage, feel free to read as much as you feel is appropriate for your family considering the age of your children (“The Sun Stops Shining” in Jesus Storybook Bible)

DISCUSS

Why did Jesus endure the cross? He endured because he loves us. He even prayed for the people there while he was on the cross. Jesus said “It is finished!” and with that gave his life for us all. What happened to his body? After taking the punishment for our sins, his body was taken to a tomb and a stone was rolled in front. A guard stood outside the tomb so no one would steal his body.

ACTIVITY

As a family, take time for private worship, reflection, and prayer using the opportunities and resources offered. Thank the Lord for sending Jesus.

Saturday

After dinner is cleaned up it’s time to make cookies—resurrection cookies!

INGREDIENTS

1 cup whole pecans, 1 tsp. vinegar, 3 egg whites, 1 pinch salt, 1 cup sugar, gallon zip bag.

DIRECTIONS

(1) Preheat oven to 300°; (2) Put pecans in plastic bag. Let children take turns breaking them by beating with a wooden spoon. Don’t crush them finely, but leave in large pieces. Explain that Jesus was arrested and beaten by the soldiers. *Read John 19:13*; (3) Let children smell the vinegar. Pour it into mixing bowl. Explain that when Jesus was thirsty on the cross, he was given vinegar to drink. *Read John 19:28-30*; (4) Pour egg whites into mixing bowl with the vinegar. Explain that eggs represent life. Jesus gave his life so we can have eternal life. *Read John 10:10-11*; (5) Sprinkle salt into each child’s hand and let them taste it. Put a dash of salt in the mixing bowl. The salt represents the tears shed by Jesus’ disciples and the bitterness of our own sin. *Read Luke 23:27*; (6) Add 1 cup sugar to the mixing bowl. Explain that this is the sweetest part of the story. Jesus died because he loves us! He wants us to know and belong to him. *Read Psalm 34:8 and John 3:16*; (7) Beat the egg whites with a mixer on high speed for 12-15 minutes until it forms stiff peaks. Explain that the white color represents the purity in God’s eyes of those whose sins have been cleansed by Jesus. *Read Isaiah 1:18 and John 3:1-3*; (8) Fold the broken nuts into the beaten egg whites. Drop by teaspoons onto wax paper covered cookie sheets. Explain that each mound represents the rocky tomb where Jesus’ body was laid. *Read Matthew 27:57-60*; (9) Put the cookie sheet in the oven, close the door and turn the oven OFF. Give each child a piece of tape and let them seal the oven door. Explain that Jesus’ tomb was sealed. *Read Matthew 27:65-66*; (10) Go to bed! Explain that they may feel sad to leave the cookies in the oven. Jesus’ followers were very sad when the tomb was sealed. *Read John 16:20,22*; (11) On Easter morning, open the oven and give everyone a cookie. Let them take a bite and show them that they are hollow inside! On the first Easter morning Jesus’ followers were amazed to find his tomb open and empty. *Read Matthew 28:1-9*.

Easter Sunday

READ

Luke 24:1-12, The Resurrection (“God’s Wonderful Surprise” in Jesus Storybook Bible)

DISCUSS

As the women came to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body, they were surprised to find the stone rolled away and the tomb was empty.

ACTIVITY

(You will need two eggs and a bowl for this activity) Before this activity, hollow out one of the eggs without cracking the shell by blowing out the contents. Hide the holes in the eggshell from your children. Talk to them about how Jesus was placed in a tomb after he died. When Mary and Mary decided to visit his tomb, they expected to find Jesus lying there—but he wasn’t! He had risen from the dead! Use the eggs as an illustration of what the women expected to find in the tomb versus what they actually found. As you tell the story, crack the eggs into the bowl, starting with the whole egg. See what kind of reactions you get after cracking the empty egg!