

# HOLY WEEK FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

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Easter is about remembering, walking the journey that Jesus walked towards the cross, sitting at the foot of the cross where Jesus died for our sin, and rejoicing with his followers as they witnessed the empty tomb. In the busyness of life, if we are not intentional, Easter can sneak up on us and pass us by without pausing to reflect and remember the power, glory, and beauty of the cross.

In his Lent devotional, Journey to the Cross, Paul David Tripp talks about the importance of this season of sitting under the shadow of the cross. He writes:

*“Under the shadow of the cross, sin doesn’t surprise us anymore, doesn’t depress us anymore, and doesn’t move us to deny or defend. Under the shadow of the cross, we remember who we are and what it is that we are dealing with. Under the shadow of the cross, we are required to admit that the greatest enemy we face is not difficulty or maltreatment from without, but the enemy of sin within. Under the shadow of the cross, we quit pointing fingers and begin crying out for help. Under the shadow of the cross, we are reminded that we are not in this battle alone; in fact, there we admit that we have no power whatsoever to battle on our own. Under the shadow of the cross we get our sanity back, admitting who we are and what it is that we so desperately need. The shadow of the cross is a place of peace and protection that can be found nowhere else. Let the shadow of the cross be your teacher.”*

This Easter season, let us pause and sit in the shadow of the cross, recognizing the depth of our sin and the greatness of our need for a Savior.

## HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

Holy Week is the week leading up to Easter; the week from Palm Sunday, the triumphal entry of Jesus, through Easter, when Jesus rose from the dead. The time when Jesus clears the temple to the last supper with Jesus and his disciples, through the Garden of Gethsemane, to Judas betraying Jesus and the arrest of Jesus, through the trial and crucifixion that fulfilled God’s plan of redemption, and finally to the empty tomb and glorious resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

This family devotional walks you through the events of Holy Week with a reading from the Bible, a story from The Biggest Story Bible Storybook, questions to talk through as a family, a verse to memorize together, and options for further reading and reflection. Each of the stories have a video to watch; at the end of the devotional is also a copy of some of the stories if you prefer to read them.

Palm Sunday - The King Comes (Luke 19:28-40)

Monday - Jesus Cleans House (Mark 11:12-26)

Tuesday - A Woman to be Remembered (John 12:2-8)

Wednesday - A Meal for the Ages (Matthew 26:17-30)

Thursday - Everyone Leave Jesus (Mark 14:27-50)

Good Friday - The Snake Crusher is Crushed for Us (Mark 15:1-40)

Saturday - A Gospel Narrative

Easter Sunday - Jesus Lives (Luke 24:1-12, 36-48)



# PALM SUNDAY (DAY ONE)

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## READ OR WATCH

Watch or read the story **“The King Comes”** from the Biggest Story Bible Storybook.

Read the story of the Triumphal Entry from Luke 19:28-40.



## QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

1. If you were a great king with lots of power and money, how would you make your entrance into an important city? How was this different than the way Jesus entered the city?
2. Why were the people happy to see Jesus? What do you think they were hoping for?
3. Why do you think Jesus chose to enter the city this way?

## QUESTIONS FOR OLDER STUDENTS

1. Why did Jesus ride into Jerusalem on a donkey rather than a horse? What Old Testament prophecy did this fulfill? (See Zechariah 9:9)
2. What does the crowd's reaction reveal about their hopes and expectations for Jesus? What type of Messiah were the people expecting?
3. What does it mean to you that Jesus is King?

## MEMORIZE

Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Luke 19:38

## PRAYER

Spend some times as a family thanking God for coming as our Savior and King.

## FURTHER READING

If you want to read further about what happened on Palm Sunday from the four gospels:

Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem - Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-10, Luke 19:28-44, John 12:12-18

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem - Luke 19:41

Jesus enters the temple - Mark 11:11

Jesus returns to Bethany - Matthew 21:17, Mark 11:11

# MONDAY (DAY TWO)

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## WATCH

Watch the story “**Jesus Cleans House**” from the Biggest Story Bible Storybook.

Read the story of Jesus cursing the fig tree and clearing the temple from Mark 11:12-26.



## QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

1. Think of a time when you got angry. What were you angry about? How did you respond?
2. Why was Jesus so angry when he entered the temple? What do we learn about Jesus in this story?
3. What are ways that you try to be the biggest or the brightest to impress Jesus or others?

## QUESTIONS FOR OLDER STUDENTS

1. The story of the cursing of the fig tree and clearing of the temple comes right after Jesus' triumphal entry. What do we learn about Jesus in this story?
2. What does Jesus say about faith and prayer? How have you experienced this in your own life?
3. Think of a time when you tried to work hard to impress others or Jesus. What does this story tell us about what God thinks about us?

## MEMORIZE

My house shall be called a house of prayer for the nations. Mark 11:17

## PRAYER

Pray that God would show you areas where you might be trying to impress or make yourself look good. Confess these to God and trust in his great love for you.

## FURTHER READING

If you want to read further about what happened on Monday of Holy Week from the four gospels:

Jesus curses the fig tree - Matthew 21:18-19, Mark 11:12-14

Jesus clears the temple - Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-46

Jesus returns to Bethany with the twelve - Mark 11:19

# TUESDAY (DAY THREE)

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## WATCH

Watch the story **“A Woman to Be Remembered”** from the Biggest Story Bible Storybook.

Read the story of Mary anointing Jesus' feet from John 12:2-8.



## QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

1. Why did Jesus say that Mary would be remembered wherever the gospel went?
2. How long do you think the scent of perfume stayed in the room? On Jesus' feet?
3. What does this story tell us about how Jesus wants us to come to him?

## QUESTIONS FOR OLDER STUDENTS

1. What is significant about what Mary did and why she did it?
2. How did Judas respond to what Mary was doing? How do Mary's actions contrast with Judas' attitude?
3. What does this story show us about true worship? What does this look like in your life?

## MEMORIZE

Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. Jude 21

## PRAYER

Spend sometime as a family worshipping God together. Praise him for who he is and thank him for what he has done for us.

## FURTHER READING

If you want to read further about what happened on Tuesday of Holy Week from the four gospels:

The disciples see the withered fig tree - Matthew 21:20-22, Mark 11:20-21

Temple controversies in Jerusalem - Matthew 21:23-23:39, Mark 11:27-12:44, Luke 20:1-21:4

Olivet discourse on the return to Bethany - Matthew 24:1-25:46, Mark 13:1-37, Luke 21:5-36





# WEDNESDAY (DAY FOUR)

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## WATCH

Watch or read the story **“A Meal for the Ages”** from the Biggest Story Bible Storybook.

Read the story of the Last Supper from Matthew 26:17-30.



## QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

1. What was special about the meal that Jesus had with his disciples?
2. Why do we still celebrate communion in church? Why is it so important to remember what God did for us?
3. What does it mean that Jesus is the perfect Passover Lamb? Can you tell the Passover story as a family (Exodus 12)?

## QUESTIONS FOR OLDER STUDENTS

1. What does the bread and wine remind us of? How does this connect to the story of the Passover from Exodus 12?
2. Jesus is the perfect Passover Lamb. How does this truth shape your daily life?
3. In what ways are you tempted to forget who Jesus is and what he has done for you?

## MEMORIZE

This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Matthew 26:28

## PRAYER

Thank God for being the perfect Passover Lamb who died to take on our sins.

## FURTHER READING

If you want to read further about what happened on Wednesday of Holy Week from the four gospels:

Jesus teaches daily in the temple - Luke 21:37-38

The Sanhedrin plots to kill Jesus- Matthew 26:3-5, Mark 14:1-2, Luke 22:1-2

Preparations for the Passover - Matthew 26:17-19, Mark 14:12-16, Luke 22:7-13

# THURSDAY (DAY FIVE)

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## WATCH

Watch or read the story **“Everyone Leaves Jesus”** from the Biggest Story Bible Storybook.

Read the story of the Garden of Gethsemane and Jesus’ betrayal and arrest from Mark 14:27-50.



## QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

1. Why did the people think Jesus deserved to die?
2. How did Jesus respond when the soldiers came to get him? What does this tell us about Jesus?
3. If you were with Jesus in the garden, how do you think you would have responded?

## QUESTIONS FOR OLDER STUDENTS

1. What was Peter’s response when Jesus told him he would deny him. What was his response after the rooster crowed 3 times?
2. In what ways are we like the disciples in this story (fall asleep, betray, deny, run away)?
3. How does remembering the cross strengthen our faith for times when we face hard things?

## MEMORIZE

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21

## PRAYER

Confess the times you have turned away from God out of fear or doubt. Ask for his forgiveness and pray for a heart of trust.

## FURTHER READING

If you want to read further about what happened on Thursday of Holy Week from the four gospels:

Passover meal/last supper - Matthew 26:20-35, Mark 14:17-26, Luke 22:14-30

Upper room discourse - John 13:1-17:26

Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane - Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-46



# GOOD FRIDAY (DAY SIX)

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## WATCH

Watch or read the story **“The Snake Crusher is Crushed for Us”** from the Biggest Story Bible Storybook.

Read the story of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus from Mark 15:1-40.



## QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

1. What does it mean that Jesus is the Snake Crusher? (Watch the story “A Very Bad Day” from the Biggest Story Bible Storybook).
2. Why did Jesus have to die on the cross? How should we respond to this?
3. Why do we call the day Jesus died on the cross Good Friday?



## QUESTIONS FOR OLDER STUDENTS

1. Read Isaiah 53:3-7. How do we see what Isaiah prophesied about Jesus’ death in the story of the crucifixion?
2. How does the cross change everything?
3. What does Jesus’ death on the cross mean to you personally? How does this shape your daily life?

## MEMORIZE

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 1 Peter 2:24

## PRAYER

Take some time to sit in silence and remember the cross. Thank God for sending his Son to take on our sins.

## FURTHER READING

If you want to read further about what happened on Friday of Holy Week from the four gospels:

Betrayal and arrest of Jesus - Matthew 26:47-56, Mark 14:43-52, Luke 22:47-53, John 18:2-12

Jewish trials of Jesus - Matthew 26:57-27:2, Mark 14:53-15:1, Luke 22:54-71, John 18:13-24

Roman trials of Jesus - Matthew 27:2-26, Mark 15:2-15, Luke 23:1-25, John 18:28-19:16

Crucifixion of Jesus - Matthew 27:27-54, Mark 15:16-39, Luke 23:26-49, John 19:16-37

Burial of Jesus - Matthew 27:57-61, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-54, John 19:38-42



# SATURDAY (DAY SEVEN)

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The Bible does not record anything for Saturday of Holy Week. Jesus has died on the cross, the curtain was torn in two, darkness and stillness surround. We await the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday.

On this day we stop to sit under the shadow of the cross. We are reminded that our greatest problem is our sin and that our greatest need is Jesus. We are reminded of the good news of the Gospel and the truth of who we are and who God is.

Today, take time as a family to read through this Gospel Narrative.

Note: for families with small children, feel free to summarize or shorten as needed.

## A Gospel Narrative

### The Glory of God

- 1 My God is immense beyond imagination. He measured the entire universe with merely the span of His hand.
- 2 He is unimaginably awesome in all of His perfections, absolutely righteous, holy, and just in all of His ways.
- 3 He has also been unbelievably good and merciful to me as the Creator and Sustainer of life.
- 4 Every breath, every heartbeat, every function of every organ in my body is a gift from Him.
- 5 Every legitimate pleasure I experience is a gift from His loving hand to me.
- 6 All that I am and all that I have I owe to Him and to His goodness.
- 7 My life in every way is, and will continue to be, utterly dependent upon Him in whom I live and move and have my being.
- 8 This wonderful God is the most supremely worthy Object of admiration, honor, and delight in all of the universe;
- 9 And He has created me with the intention that I might glorify Him by finding my soul's delight in Him and by living in joyful obedience to Him in all of my ways.

### My Sin Against God

- 10 Yet I could not have failed this great God more miserably than I have.
- 11 Instead of giving thanks to Him and humbly submitting to His rule over my life, I have rebelled against Him and have actually sought to exalt myself above Him.
- 12 Going my own way and living according to my own wisdom, I have broken countless times either the letter or the spirit of every one of God's Ten Commandments.
- 13 Thinking myself to be wise, I have shown myself to be a fool; and because of my arrogance, God has every right to damn me to the everlasting experience of His terrifying wrath in the Lake of Fire.
- 14 So as for myself, apart from Christ I am bound by the guilt of my sins and also bound by the power of sin, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures.
- 15 Apart from Christ, I am also utterly deserving of and destined for eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire, completely unable to save myself or even to make one iota of a contribution to my own salvation.

### God's Work on My Behalf

- 16 However, what I could not do, God did - and in doing it, He did it all, sending His own Son into the world to die on the cross for my sin, thereby showing me unfathomable love.

- 17 God loved me so much that He was willing to suffer the loss of His Son, and even more amazingly, He was willing to allow His Son to suffer the loss of Him at the cross.
- 18 Jesus loved me so much that He was willing to lay down His life for me. No one could ever love me more or better than Jesus.
- 19 On the third day after Jesus' death, God raised Him from the dead, thereby announcing that His death was completely sufficient to atone for every sin that I have or will commit throughout my lifetime.
- 20 God then exalted Christ to His own right hand, where Christ now reigns from on high, granting salvation and forgiveness to all who call on Him by faith.

### **My Salvation**

- 21 Now when my time came and I placed my faith in Jesus, God instantly granted me a great salvation.
- 22 He forgave me of all of my sins, past, present, and future.
- 23 He made me His child, adopting me into His family.
- 24 He gave me the gift of the Holy Spirit, who gives me God's power, who pours out God's love within my heart, and who tenderly communicates to my spirit that I am a child of God and an heir of eternal glory in heaven.
- 25 In saving me, God also freed me from slavery to any and all sins.
- 26 I no longer have to sin again, for sin's mastery over me has been broken!
- 27 In saving me, God also justified me, and being justified through Christ, I have a peace with God that will endure forever.
- 28 In justifying me, God declared me innocent of my sins and pronounced me righteous with the very righteousness of Jesus.
- 29 God also allowed His future and present wrath against me to be completely propitiated by Jesus, who bore it upon Himself while on the cross.
- 30 Consequently, God now has only love, compassion, and deepest affection for me, and this love is without any admixture of wrath whatsoever.
- 31 God always looks upon me and treats me with gracious favor, always working all things together for my ultimate and eternal good.
- 32 God's grace abounds to me even through trials.
- 33 Because I am a justified one, He subjugates every trial and forces it to do good unto me.
- 34 When I sin, God's grace abounds to me all the more as He graciously maintains my justified status as described above.
- 35 When I sin, God feels no wrath in His heart against me.
- 36 His heart is filled with nothing but love for me, and He longs for me to repent and confess my sins to Him, so that He might show me the gracious and forgiving love that has been in His heart all along.
- 37 God does not require my confession before He desires to forgive me.
- 38 In His heart He already has forgiven me; and when I come to Him to confess my sins to Him, He runs to me (as it were) and is repeatedly embracing and kissing me even before I get the words of my confession out of my mouth.
- 39 God does see my sins, and He is grieved by my sins. His grief comes partly from the fact that in my moments of sin, I am not receiving the fullness of His love for me.
- 40 He even sends chastisement into my life: but He does so because He is for me, and He loves me; and He disciplines me for my ultimate good.
- 41 I don't deserve any of this, even on my best day; but this is my salvation, and herein I stand. Thank You, Jesus.

*(From A Gospel Primer by Milton Vincent)*



# EASTER SUNDAY (DAY EIGHT)

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## WATCH

Watch or read the story “**Jesus Lives**” from the Biggest Story Bible Storybook.

Read the story of Jesus’ Resurrection from Luke 24:1-12 and 36-48.



## QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

1. Why do we celebrate Easter?
2. Imagine you were one of the women who went to the tomb. What would you think if you saw the tomb empty and heard the angel say Jesus had risen from the dead?
3. What does it mean that Jesus rose from the dead? Why is this important?

## QUESTIONS FOR OLDER STUDENTS

1. When Jesus is talking with his disciples, why does he say he had to die (v 46-48)?
2. Why did Jesus have to rise from the dead?
3. How does the resurrection give us hope when things are hard or uncertain?

## MEMORIZE

Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

1 Corinthians 15:54-55

## PRAYER

Praise God that he not only sent his Son to the cross to die for our sins, but that he also rose again to conquer death. Pray for someone you know who does not know Jesus.

## FURTHER READING

If you want to read further about what happened on Easter Sunday of Holy Week from the four gospels:

Empty tomb witnesses - Matthew 28:1-8, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12

Resurrection appearances - Matthew 28:9-20, Mark 16:9-20, Luke 24:13-53, John 20:1-21:25



The Biggest Story Bible Storybook

# EASTER

## STORIES



*WRITTEN BY*  
**KEVIN DEYOUNG**

*ILLUSTRATED BY*  
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# A Note to Parents

FROM KEVIN DEYOUNG



**I**f Easter isn't true, then the Christian faith is worthless. That may sound a bit over the top, but that's exactly the point Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 15.

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins (1 Cor. 15:16–17).

Christianity is more than believing in the resurrection, but it is never less. When Jesus declared to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life,” he followed up this pronouncement with a simple and bracing question: “Do you believe this?” (John 11:26). That's the question we should ask ourselves and—when appropriate—our children every Easter.

Do we believe a Jewish man born in a feeding trough in the backwater of the Roman Empire was the Son of God incarnate? Do we believe this man died on a cross to take away our sins? Do we believe that he rose again three days later? Do we believe that



after this resurrection he appeared to hundreds of witnesses, ate fish for breakfast, showed off his scars, and walked through walls? And do we believe this same man, who later ascended into heaven, is coming back to earth someday to judge the living and the dead? Jesus's question to Martha is his question to us: Do you believe this?

To be sure, the resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact whether we believe it or not. But when we embrace for ourselves the story of Jesus, and the person and power of Jesus, it makes all the difference. If Jesus is the Son of God, we should listen to him as if he were God. If he rose from the dead, he is worthy of all our praise and worship. If he could be trusted to keep his word then, he can be trusted to keep his word now. What could be crazier than saying you believe this man defeated death, but then denying that he has any claim over your life?

The annual holidays of Good Friday and Easter provide a wonderful opportunity to talk to our children about what Christ accomplished for us through his death and resurrection. Whether we get to tell the story to children in a Sunday school class, to family around the dinner table, or to a neighbor wondering what the fuss of Easter is all about, the message about a man who died and couldn't stay dead often resonates with young people more than we (or they) understand.

Whether we realize it or not, we are all formed by stories. This is especially true the younger we are. It is our job (and privilege!) as parents to pass on the stories of our faith to our children, and it is the work of the church to do the same with the people in her midst. I hope that the five stories in this booklet—taken from *The Biggest Story Bible Storybook*—can be a helpful reminder of the good news we believe as Christians, and the good news we get to share with others.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin DeYoung', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Kevin DeYoung

## CHAPTER 77

# The King Comes

LUKE 19

**T**he Biggest Story is all about Jesus—the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Snake Crusher. And believe it or not, the story that is told is mainly about his death. Yes, there's the Christmas story about his birth. And there are plenty of stories about his miracles and his ministry. But the biggest thing about the Biggest Story is that Jesus died—and of course, that he didn't stay dead.

That's why the Bible tells us nothing about Jesus the toddler, or Jesus the teenager, or Jesus the college student (okay, there wasn't college yet), but it does tell us a lot about the last week of Jesus's life. The last week started happy on Sunday, but for just a few hours. Then things got sad, and sadder, and sadder still, until Friday and Saturday were the saddest days in the history of the world.

Then Sunday came, and it turned out that all the very sad things were a part of God's very amazing plan. But we'll get to that Sunday soon enough. If you skip the sad parts of the story, the happy parts won't seem nearly as happy as they really are.



So let's start with the first Sunday of the last week of Jesus's life. We call the day Palm Sunday, because the crowds lined the road with their coats and with palm branches, like a king was coming to town.

And he was! The king was Jesus, and as he rode to Jerusalem on a donkey, the disciples and the crowd of pilgrims gathered round to sing his praises. "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they shouted. "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!"

In other words, they believed Jesus was the Messiah they had been waiting for. What a happy day.











Except it wasn't happy for everyone. The Pharisees didn't like all the attention Jesus was getting, and they didn't think Jesus deserved the praise he was receiving. "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "tell your disciples to be quiet."

Jesus made clear he didn't agree with the professional party poopers. "If these people were silent," he said to the Pharisees, "the stones would start singing in their place." You can't shut up the whole world when its Creator comes to town.

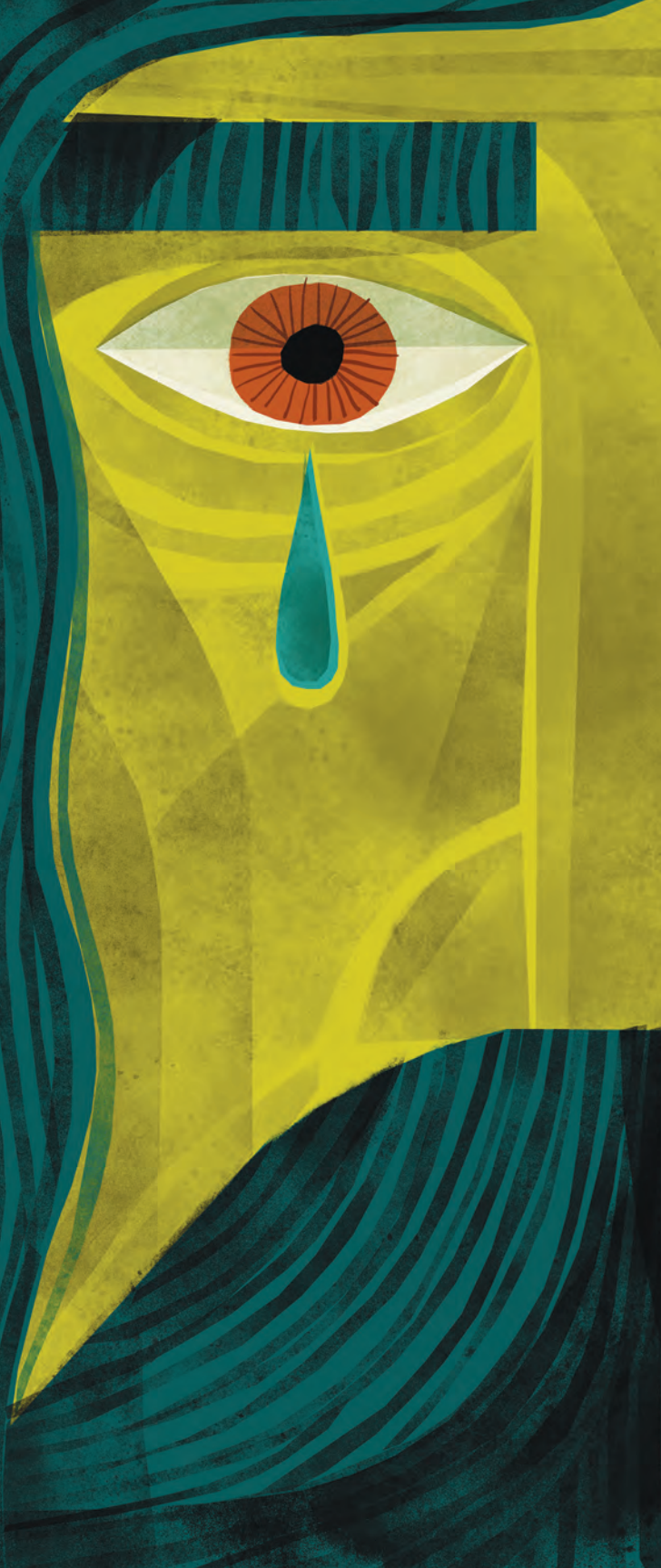


As happy as the crowds were on Palm Sunday, by the time Jesus made it near the city, his smiles had turned to tears. He looked at the great city of Jerusalem and wept because he knew what was going to happen. The people were going to reject him. They were refusing to follow the true King. They were going to kill the one who came to save them. Jesus cried for the sad days that would come upon Jerusalem in the years ahead. That was hard.

Harder still, Jesus knew on that happy Palm Sunday that the hardest, saddest days of all would be the ones he would have to endure over the next week.

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**PRAYER:** You are the Savior, King Jesus! Give us life to sing and shout your praise. Amen.



## CHAPTER 80

# A Meal for the Ages

MATTHEW 26



**J**esus knew he was going to die and that he needed one more meal with his disciples. Jesus made the plans. He found a room and got everything prepared for supper. Jesus was going to be the host of this special meal.

The meal was special in a lot of ways. For starters, it was Passover—the holiday where God’s people celebrated when the angel of death passed them over in Egypt and the Lord set them free. It was also the last supper Jesus would have with his disciples before Judas betrayed him. And it was the meal where Jesus handed down the practice of the Lord’s Supper (sometimes called Communion) to the church. This was no ordinary dinnertime.



As they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it. He then broke the bread into pieces and gave it to his disciples. Nothing too extraordinary so far. But then Jesus said something very important. "Take and eat. This is my body." Jesus wasn't saying that the bread somehow became his body. He was saying, "You used to eat the bread of suffering from Egypt. Now you will eat the bread of suffering from my death. Whenever you eat this bread, I will be with you."



Then Jesus took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave each of the disciples something to drink. “This is my blood of the covenant,” Jesus said. Jesus wasn’t saying the red wine they drank was actually his blood. Jesus was saying, “You used to sacrifice the blood of bulls and goats for the forgiveness of sins. Now there is a better promise. If you feast on me in faith, God will wipe away your sins and you will live forever.”

When Christians meet together for worship, they still celebrate the supper that Jesus gave his disciples. It’s a special meal for those who repent of their sins, trust in Jesus, and belong to a church. Communion is a time to remember what Jesus did and to tell the world that he died for sinners.

It’s also a time where Jesus is with us. When we eat from the broken bread and drink from the cup, we have fellowship with Jesus. We are joined with one another and joined with the one who died for us. It’s food to help our faith, a supper to give us strength.

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**PRAYER:** Jesus, we thank you for the bread and the cup. We thank you for life in your name. Amen.







# Everyone Leaves Jesus

MARK 14



**J**esus knew he was going to die and that his closest friends would desert him.

Judas was the worst. He was one of the twelve disciples, but he never truly loved Jesus. He betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. For a little bit of money, Judas agreed to turn Jesus over to his enemies. Many of the Jewish leaders hated Jesus. They were jealous of his popularity. They were envious of his power. Most of all, they wanted to kill Jesus because he said he was the Son of God. They didn't have eyes to see who Jesus really was.

Early on Friday morning, after the Last Supper, while it was still dark, Judas came with a mob to arrest Jesus. The men had swords and clubs. The chief priests and scribes and elders were there too. Judas gave Jesus a kiss on the cheek and said, "Teacher!" That was the sign to those who were with Judas. They laid hands on Jesus and took him by force. But he didn't put up a fight. It was almost his time to die.









Jesus's friends and followers ran away. They were too scared to be seen with Jesus.

Judas wasn't the only one to turn on Jesus. Before the arrest, Peter, James, and John were supposed to watch and pray with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. But it was late, and they were sleepy. Jesus's best disciples couldn't even stay awake one hour to help their teacher and friend.

Later in the morning, after his arrest, Jesus stood trial before the chief priests and scribes and elders. It wasn't a fair trial. They brought in people to lie about Jesus. Even the things Jesus really said, the priests didn't understand (or try to understand). They had already decided that Jesus deserved to die.



If that wasn't bad enough, Jesus's boldest disciple was turning into a chicken, or a scaredy-cat, or whatever animal you can think of that is the opposite of courage. A few hours earlier, Peter made a big boast that he would never, ever leave Jesus. But Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew Peter. And sure enough, before the rooster crowed on Friday morning, Peter had denied Jesus three times.



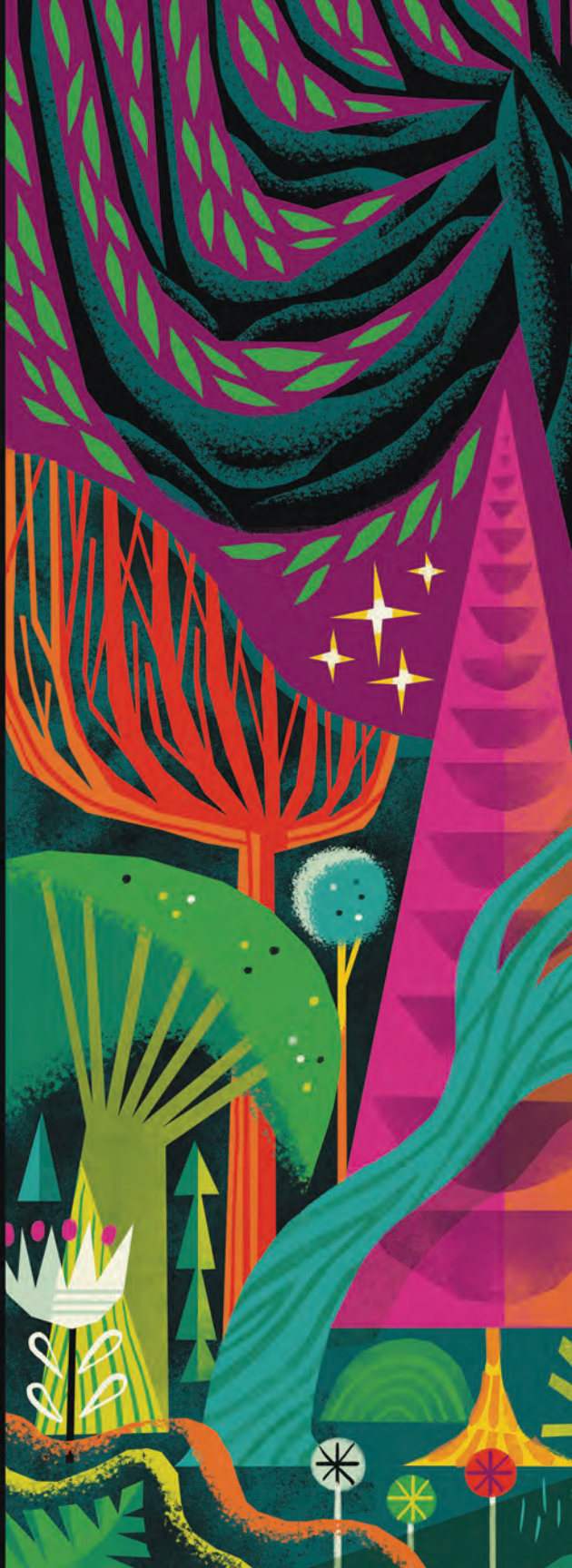


Unlike Judas, Peter would later repent of his sin and go on to do great things for Jesus. But there wasn't any greatness in Peter on that day. He swore up and down that he had never even met Jesus before. No one wanted to be near Jesus, let alone follow him.

Jesus was hated, when he should have been loved. He was despised, when he should have been worshiped. When his friends and followers should have been there for him, they all scattered. What Jesus was about to face, he would have to face alone.

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**PRAYER:** Dear God, forgive us for the times we have denied Jesus or been too scared to follow him. Amen.







## CHAPTER 82

# The Snake Crusher Is Crushed for Us

## MARK 15



**J**esus knew he was going to die and that it was going to be no ordinary death.

We call the day he died “Good Friday.” And it was good—very good, amazingly good. We would say it was unbelievably good, except that it happened and we should believe it. Jesus suffered so that we can be set free. Jesus died so that we can live forever. Jesus was the good shepherd laying down his life for his sheep. That’s why we call it Good Friday.

But for anyone who loved Jesus, that Friday seemed anything but good. It must have seemed to the disciples like Sad Friday or Tragic Friday or The Worst Friday in the History of the World.



As soon as it was morning, the Jewish leaders bound Jesus and delivered him to Pilate. Pilate was the Roman ruler in that region. He was the one who would decide whether Jesus lived or died (even though he could only do what God had already planned).

Pilate wasn't convinced Jesus had done anything wrong. He wanted to release Jesus and be done with him. But Pilate was more concerned about people liking him than doing the right thing, so he gave the crowd in Jerusalem an option: "I will release one prisoner: this murderer Barabbas or the King of the Jews. Who should I release?"

They chose Barabbas instead of Jesus.

"Then what shall I do with Jesus?" Pilate asked. "Crucify him!" they shouted.




So the soldiers took Jesus and led him away. They clothed him in a purple robe and gave him a crown of thorns. They pretended to worship Jesus, but it was all a joke. They struck him on the head and spat on him.

If you could have seen Jesus being led to his death that afternoon, everything would have looked upside down. Here was the Maker of all things too weak to carry his cross. Here was the loving King killed between two thieves. Here was God's beloved Son mocked and mistreated by anyone and everyone.









But there he was—Jesus,  
the Christ—hanging from  
a cross. The sky went black  
because it was a day of  
judgment, and Jesus cried  
out to heaven for help. But  
this was a time to feel the  
curse of the law, not the  
smile of God.


Jesus had become sin  
for us. He breathed his  
last, and the curtain of  
the temple was torn in  
two. The disciples were  
scared and confused. The  
world was dark and sad.  
Everything seemed wrong.











But one Roman soldier at the foot of the cross got it right. “Truly,” he said, “this man was the Son of God.” And if Jesus was the Son of God, maybe that last breath was not the last word from Jesus.

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**PRAYER:** Dear Jesus, we thank you for your sacrifice on the cross. You faced God’s frown for sinners like us. Amen.

CHAPTER 83

# Jesus Lives


LUKE 24



**J**esus knew he was going to die and that he wouldn't stay dead.

Friday was dark and sad. Saturday was stone-cold silent. But Sunday—the third day—was not just another day or another week. It was another age. A new time had begun. The Biggest Story had turned a page. The world would never be the same.





At the break of day, Mary Magdalene and a group of women went to the tomb. They thought they would find Jesus there and put perfume on his dead body. What they found instead was a complete surprise. On the outside of the tomb the stone had been rolled away, and on the inside of the tomb there was no Jesus!



The women wondered what this meant. But before they could think very long, two angels as bright as the sun stood by them. "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" the angels asked. "Jesus is not here. He has risen, just as he said!"





Then the women remembered that Jesus had said that he would be raised on the third day. They had not understood what this meant. But now they did. The slithering serpent had not won after all. Death had been defeated. The wages of sin had been paid for. The long-awaited Snake Crusher had kept his promise, and all the promises of God would forever be kept in him.







Mary and the other women ran back to tell the disciples what they had seen and heard. At first, the disciples didn't believe them. "A dead man back to life? What a fairy tale," they thought.

But Peter got up and ran to the tomb to see for himself whether the good news was too good to be true. When he arrived at the tomb, it was even more amazing than he had dared to hope. Peter hurried into the tomb and found nothing but grave clothes. Jesus wouldn't be needing those anymore. He wasn't dead any longer, and he wouldn't be dead ever again.



In the days and weeks ahead, Jesus appeared to the disciples several times—in a room, along the road, on the beach making breakfast. He even appeared to more than five hundred of his followers at one time.

God raised Jesus from the dead, and plenty of people saw him with their own two eyes. The light of the world was still shining. The bread of life was still alive. The true vine was the firstfruits of a new hope. It turns out the best news in the history of the world was too good not to be true.

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**PRAYER:** We thank you, God, for the resurrection and the new life we have in Jesus. Amen.







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