



# Easter

**8-Day Adult Devotional**



# Day 1: Our Humble King

*"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever" – Psalm 118:1.*

## READ: MATTHEW 21:1-11

No one but Jesus knew His triumphant entry into Jerusalem would lead to His humiliating death. In a matter of days, the crowd's cries of "hosanna" would turn into a call for His death. Yet Jesus, in concert with the will of His Father, set His face toward Jerusalem and mounted a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; Luke 9:51). Christ's peculiar mode of transportation reveals three things about His identity:

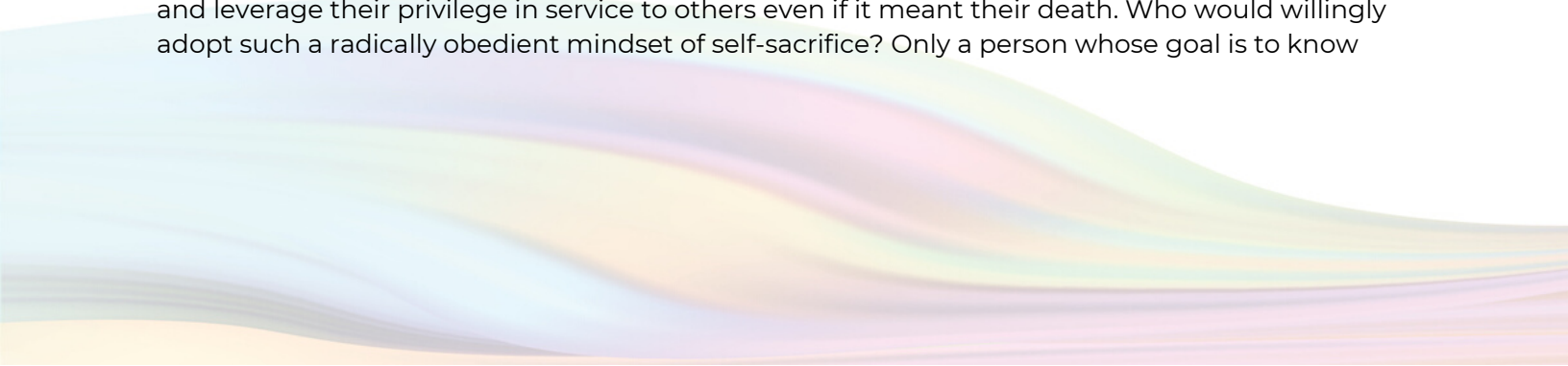
1) Jesus is Yahweh's promised king: Matthew 21:1–11 is the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9–10. Zechariah penned this prophecy after Israel returned home to Jerusalem to restore the temple and their way of life. Though they had been restored to their land, they did not have a king to protect them from the oppression of kings like Herod and Caesar. By riding in on a donkey, Jesus presented Himself as Yahweh's promised king whose righteous "rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Zechariah 9:10).

2) Jesus is humanity's peaceful king: Zechariah also prophesied that Yahweh's promised king would "proclaim peace to the nations" (Zechariah 9:10). The scandal of the scene was not that king was riding on a donkey. Kings often rode on donkeys, but only during times of peace. When going to war, a king would ride on warhorses as a symbol of power. By riding on a donkey, Jesus reveals something of what He was about to do. He was going to make it possible for sinful humans to have peace with God.

3) Jesus is our humble king: Jesus mounted a donkey. He had every right to ride in on a warhorse and hold Israel and all of humanity accountable for their sins, but instead, in humility He rode in on a donkey to bring peace and salvation to the world. He is our humble King, and His love for the nations endures forever.

On their sophomore album, Christian alternative rock band, My Epic, give a poetic account of the events of Holy Week in their song, "Lower Still." They recount the great descent of Christ from heaven to death. After putting on flesh, Jesus went lower still and became humanity's servant. Lower still, He went washing the disciple's feet only to suffer from their betrayal and abandonment. Yet, that wasn't enough. He had to go lower still, even into the belly of death, bearing all the consequences of our sins. Lower still. Lower still, our Humble King went to bring about our salvation and redemption.

Reflecting on this same "lower still" kind of humility, Paul exhorted the church at Philippi to adopt Christ's mindset (Philippians 2:6). He invited them to, like Christ, divest themselves of their power and leverage their privilege in service to others even if it meant their death. Who would willingly adopt such a radically obedient mindset of self-sacrifice? Only a person whose goal is to know



Christ and the power of His resurrection would volunteer to “participate in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (Philippians 3:10–11).

*Questions:*

1. How does Jesus, our humble King, encourage and challenge you?
2. In what ways is God calling you to divest yourself of your power and leverage your privilege for the sake of others?

## PRAYER

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## DISCIPLINE PRACTICE: THANKSGIVING

Take a moment today to give thanks to God for sending Jesus, our Humble King, into the world so that we might live. Use Psalm 136 to guide your prayers of thanksgiving. When you reach the end of the psalm, continue the story of God’s acts of salvation leading up to Jesus’ processional into Jerusalem. Then, continuing the pattern, include specific ways He has demonstrated his redemption in your own life. For example, “After 400 years of silence, He sent His angel Gabriel to Mary, His love endures forever” or “You gave me the grace to not respond in anger to my friend’s hurtful comment, Your faithful love endures forever.” Pray these prayers out loud. It is especially helpful to pray this out loud - to verbalize God’s faithfulness to you and to hear your own voice lifting up praises to God.

## ADDITIONAL READING

Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29; Zechariah 9:1–10; Philippians 2:5–11



# Day 2: Extravagant Love

“Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies”  
– Psalm 36:5

## READ: JOHN 12:1-11

On Holy Monday, we remember this intriguing story about Mary, the sister of Lazarus who had sat at Jesus's feet like a disciple even though she was a woman. This time, instead of sitting as His feet, she anointed His feet. Jesus described Mary's action as anointing Him for burial, a surprising thing for Him to say at this point in the week. Wasn't it just yesterday that He rode triumphantly into Jerusalem to waving palm branches and shouts of “Hosanna”? Why was He talking about His burial? But things would change drastically in the next few days. Before the week was over, Jesus would offer Himself as a sacrifice in an act of extravagant love for us (Romans 5:8).

Mary's anointing was an act of extravagant love too. Judas said it was worth a year's wages. Though Judas's motivation was sinful, he was right—the money could have gone a long way in helping the poor! Yet Jesus praised her for it. Because it was extravagant. She didn't just put a few drops of perfume on His feet, she emptied the whole jar. Anointing Jesus with this oil did not just reflect Mary's generosity. It was a picture of the extravagant sacrifice Jesus would make for us.

The type of jar that held this perfume had a very long neck and a very slow drip. The perfume was very strong, so only a little was needed—usually just a few small drops at a time. To pour out the whole jar, the neck of the bottle had to be broken\*. Just as Mary broke the jar over Jesus's feet, Jesus was broken for us on the cross. Out of His extravagant love that reaches to the heavens, He offered His whole self for us.

When we really understand the extravagance of Jesus's sacrifice for us, we will do just as Mary did and offer all we are and all we have to Him. Not out of guilt or obligation, but out of extravagant love. This is our act of spiritual worship—our whole lives offered to Him (Romans 12:1). Not just Sunday mornings, but every minute of every day. Not just ten percent, but all that we have. When we love Jesus like that, some people will call us too extravagant. Some of them might even claim to be Jesus's followers, like Judas. But it's only because they don't really understand just how extravagant His love for us is. A few drops is not enough for Jesus. He deserves our all.

### Questions:

1. Take a few minutes to reflect on what it really means that the God of the universe loves you so much that He came to earth and died for you? How does understanding God's love for you compel you to respond?
2. In what ways does your life need to change for you to offer your whole life to Jesus as a living sacrifice?

\*William Hendricksen, Luke, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 405.



# PRAYER

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## DISCIPLINE PRACTICE: SUBMISSION

This discipline may seem a little more abstract than others. How do you “do” submission like you do meditation or prayer or Bible study? Submission isn’t so much a specific action as it is a posture of the heart and a decision of the will. Submission is self-denial and setting aside our own will in allegiance to Christ. It is the essence of discipleship (Mark 8:34–35). As a spiritual discipline, it’s not something you just do once; it’s something you practice every day and grow in throughout your life with Jesus.

To practice submission today, put your body into a position of reverence, kneeling or bowing down if you are able. You can even stretch out your hands with palms open upward to symbolize giving up your will to God’s. Then offer your life to God in worship. Commit to submitting yourself to His authority in all things. End your prayer with the words of Jesus, “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Then get up and live that way too. Don’t let it just be a prayer. Make it your lifestyle.

## ADDITIONAL READING

Psalms 36:5–11; Romans 8:34–39; Ephesians 3:14–19; Hebrews 9:11–15



# Day 3: Who is this Son of Man?

*“Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress” – Psalm 71:3*

## READ: JOHN 12:20-36

“Who is this Son of Man?” the crowd asked. “Didn’t we just lay down our cloaks to receive him? Weren’t we just celebrating his inauguration as Yahweh’s promised King? Doesn’t the song go, ‘...I have sworn by my holiness—and I will not lie to David—that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun? (Psalms 89:35)’ What does he mean the ‘Son of Man’ will be lifted up?”

Confusion.

Throughout the book of John, we encounter men and women trying to reconcile their understanding of the Scriptures with the Jesus who stood in front of them. It’s unclear if Nicodemus ever came to understand Jesus’s teaching on eternal life (John 3:1–21). The woman at the well didn’t accept Jesus’s take on worship until after He told her everything she had ever done (John 4:1–39). When Jesus said, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life,” many of His disciples deserted Him (John 6:22–60). They couldn’t wrap their mind around what Jesus was saying. The same was true for this crowd of Jews and Gentiles in Jerusalem. In what world does triumph equal death? Why would God send the Messiah into the world to die?

The wisdom of God is not like the wisdom of man (1 Corinthians 1:18–25). The wisdom of man would’ve suggested that Jesus enter Jerusalem on a warhorse, not a donkey, to overthrow Caesar’s government. While the wisdom of man teaches us to pursue the joys of this life, the wisdom of God compels us to die to the pursuits of this life to receive the eternal joys of the next (John 12:25; 1 John 2:15–17).

God’s wisdom is countercultural. However, it is embedded in the very fabric of creation. Jesus says, “Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24). If Jesus hadn’t surrendered His life, He would not have become the firstborn of many brothers and sisters (Romans 8:29). He would’ve remained a single seed. But Jesus was the seed God promised would crush the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15). He was the seed through whom God purposed to bless all the nation of the earth (Genesis 12:1–3). And He is the seed of David, who on the day of judgment will ride in on His warhorse to defeat sin, death, and Satan forever (Revelations 22:16). In God’s world, the world He created, multiplication comes through death and triumph over death through the Son of Man’s crucifixion.

Questions:

1. In what ways have the circumstances of your life challenged your understanding of God and His Word?
2. How has God brought life to you through hardship and suffering you’ve experienced?

## PRAYER

O God, be the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life: Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## DISCIPLINE PRACTICE: CONFESSION

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18–31 on your knees. Consider how Christ and His ways have been a stumbling block for you. Confess the ways you have clung to man's wisdom and rejected God's. After a time of confession, pray a prayer of repentance to God and ask for His help to live life the way He intended.

## ADDITIONAL READING

Psalms 71:1–4; 1 Corinthians 1:18–31



# Day 4: Loving His Betrayer

*"You are my help and my deliverer; Lord, do not delay" – Psalm 70:5*

## READ: JOHN 13:21-30

It must have broken Jesus's heart to know that one of His closest followers would betray Him. One of the guys He had hand-picked to be His followers after praying all night on the mountain (Luke 6:12). Maybe He knew from the very beginning that Judas would betray Him, maybe He didn't. He at least knew by John 6, about a year before His death, that Judas was evil (John 6:70). Yet, He did not send him away or try to stop him, or even take the money purse away from him! Jesus knew Judas would betray Him and still He loved him "to the very end" (John 13:1 NLT).

He even washed Judas's feet the night before His crucifixion. Jesus sent Judas off to do the deed in the middle of the meal; He could have sent him off at the beginning instead, before He washed the disciples' feet. But He didn't. He knew Judas would betray Him, that even at that moment, the devil was working in his heart (John 13:2). Yet Jesus stooped down and washed his feet. Though He was their master, He made Himself the servant of them all, Judas included. What kind of love is this, that washes the feet of His betrayer?

This is the kind of love that comes only from God. The agape love that "love[s] your enemies and pray[s] for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). The same way God never stopped loving His people in the Old Testament, even when they turned their backs on Him (Hosea 3:1). When Judas left, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him" (John 13:31). God was glorified in Jesus when He showed love to His enemy because, as He preached in the Sermon on the Mount, loving your enemies makes you like God, in His holy and perfect love (Matthew 5:44–48).

When we show love to our enemies, we also reflect the glory of God. When the congregation members of the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC stood up in court and showed forgiveness and compassion to the man who shot and killed nine of their loved ones and even prayed for his soul, CBS News called it "one of the most extraordinary scenes ever in an American courtroom."\* When we show love to those who don't deserve it, the world sees it as extraordinary because it is not ordinary. It is not the way of the world. It is the way of God.

Questions:

1. Are you harboring any anger, unforgiveness, or bitterness in your heart? How is God calling you to reach out and forgive those who have hurt you?
2. How is God leading you to love and serve your enemies—people who frustrate you, work against you, or are difficult for you to love?

\*Kris Kirst, "Family Members to Alleged Charleston Gunman: 'I Forgive You'" CBS News, Jun 19, 2015 – <https://www.cbs19.tv/article/news/family-members-to-alleged-charleston-gunman-i-forgive-you/263623319>



# PRAYER

Lord God, whose blessed Son gave his body to be whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## DISCIPLINE PRACTICE: FORGIVENESS

Theologian and seminary professor Robert Mulholland called forgiveness the most difficult spiritual discipline.\* A lot of us don't think of forgiveness as a spiritual discipline, but true forgiveness takes great discipline, and it can be done only by the power and love of the Holy Spirit. It can take weeks, months, even years to forgive deep hurts that have been done to us. The deeper the relational investment, the deeper the wound.

To practice forgiveness today, first prepare your heart by reflecting on how much God has forgiven you. You may even want to meditate on Matthew 6:15 and Ephesians 4:32. Pray for your heart to soften toward the person who has hurt you. You may want to journal your thoughts or feelings to let go of anger and bitterness. Begin praying for that person, if you haven't already. When you are praying for someone, it is much harder to hold onto feelings of anger for them. You may have to practice this over a period of several weeks, months, even years before you are ready to reach out to them, but when you are, write them a letter, give them a call or meet with them to talk, depending on which option is safest for you.

## ADDITIONAL READING

Psalms 70; Matthew 5:43–48; Romans 12:14–21; Hebrews 12:1–3

\*Peter Scazzero, "Forgiveness - the Most Difficult Spiritual Discipline," Emotionally Healthy Discipleship, Nov 13, 2013 - <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/forgiveness-the-most-difficult-spiritual-discipline/?v=7516fd43adaa>

# Day 5: Jesus' New Command

*"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants"*  
– Psalm 116:15

## READ: JOHN 13:1-17, 33-35

We've come to the day before Christ's crucifixion. The day before everything went dark, when Jesus gave up His spirit and declared His work finished. Before He went, He had one final and new command to give His disciples. He said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34–35). What's so new about this command? Isn't it synonymous with the old one?


No.

The old command is a directive to love your neighbor as yourself. The new one is a call to love your neighbor as Jesus has loved you. Jesus has loved you better than you have loved yourself. He left every comfort of heaven to be flogged and mangled for you. He endured separation from His Father so you could be brought back into right fellowship with Him. He's done things for you that you would never do for yourself. With this new command, the standard of love is now based on how He has loved for you, not how you love yourself.

Jesus modeled the kind of love He wanted His disciples to have for one another by washing their feet. After they finished the Passover meal, Jesus got up, laid aside his outer garment, and became a servant. He wrapped a towel around His waist to wash His friends' feet. On the surface, this task seems completely unnecessary. They are all grown men. They can wash their own feet. And, if anyone's feet should be washed, it's the Rabbi, not his students. But in this act of washing His disciples' feet, Jesus proved even further that He came to serve and not to be served (Mark 10:45). And, He commissioned His disciples to do the same.

In his book, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*, Donald Whitley, asks the question, "Are you more loving?" Whitley doesn't ask if we've mastered the art of loving our neighbor. He knows we won't fully love like Christ until we see Him (1 John 3:2). He simply wants to know if we're growing. Even the apostle John lived in the tension of our growing sanctification. While he called us repeatedly and unapologetically to love others as Christ has loved us, he reminded us that if we fall short of this command, "we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1).

Questions:

1. Since you have become a follower of Jesus, are you more loving? In what tangibles ways have you seen the Holy Spirit grow you in the area of love?
  2. When and with whom do you tend to lack love?
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## PRAYER

Almighty God, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## DISCIPLINE PRACTICE: SERVICE

Read and consider the apostle John's teaching on love in 1 John 3:16–18.

Love is so much more than warm and fuzzy feelings. Real love is an act of service. Through our sacrificial acts of love, we reveal Jesus and His love to the world. You will likely have lots of opportunities to do this today, but think about a way you can intentionally and tangibly sacrifice for someone or for a group of people. Remember, it's not about doing a good deed to make yourself feel good. It's about glorifying our Father who is in heaven by allowing our acts of love to serve as a parable that puts His sacrificial love display.

## ADDITIONAL READING

Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19; 1 John 1–5



# Day 6: The Greatest Love

*"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."*

*– John 15:13*

## READ: JOHN 18:1-11, 19:16-30

It may seem strange to call this day "Good Friday," because nothing that happened on it seems very good. Betrayal, denial, false accusations, a sham of a trial, a bloodthirsty crowd, beatings, mocking, a crown of thorns, and an excruciating death on a cross. All for a completely innocent man. But we call it "good" because of what this day did for mankind.

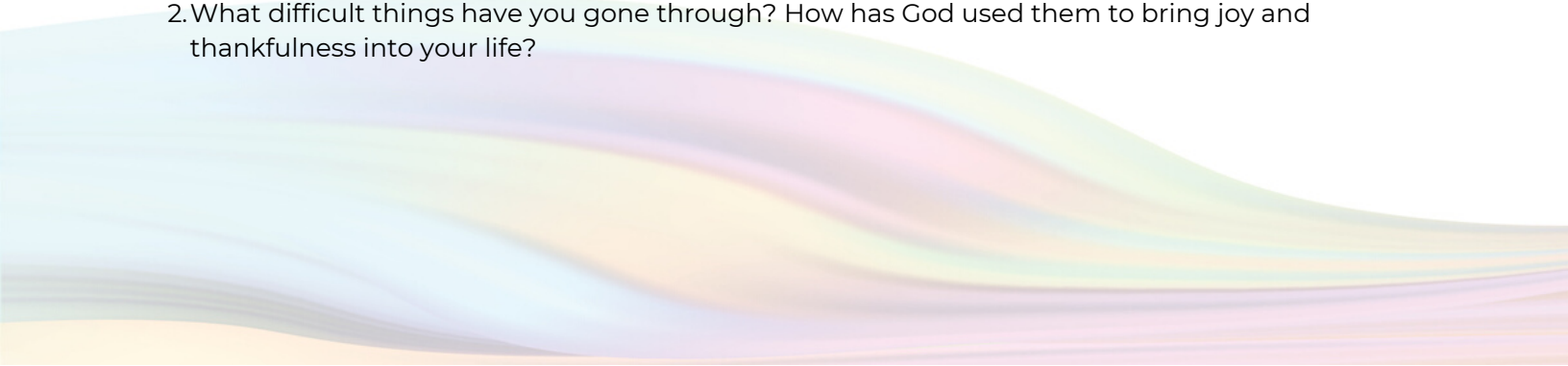
Hebrews describes Christ's death as the ultimate sacrifice. The once-for-all sacrifice for the forgiveness of all sins of all mankind over all the world for all time (Hebrews 10:12). As terrible as this moment was for Jesus, it is good news for the world.

In the ancient world, the cross was a symbol of shame. In Rome, only criminals and slaves endured death by the cross. As Paul wrote in Galatians, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole" (Galatians 3:13). Hanging on a cross was considered one of the most humiliating and shameful things a person could ever endure. And yet, the God of the universe endured this most humiliating of deaths . . . for us. Because of His great love.

The writer of Hebrews says Jesus endured the shame of the cross "for the joy set before him." (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus endured all of this for the joy of being in heaven with you and with me. What makes Good Friday good is not the events that happened, but what those events make possible. Because Jesus died, we can be forgiven and reconciled to God. Because He rose again, one day we will rise with Him (Romans 6:8).

We may well have to go through hard things on this earth. We may have our own crosses to bear (Matthew 16:24). When we go through difficult times, Peter encourages us to think like Jesus and endure it by looking forward to the hope of our future inheritance in heaven—"an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade" (1 Peter 1:4). Just as Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before Him, we can endure the hard times we experience for the joy set before us. Who knows what may happen in our lives, even in the next few weeks? Who knows what hard things we may have to endure? But we can trust in the eternal promises of God and endure with the hope and joy that are made possible through the suffering Jesus endured on Good Friday.

Questions:

1. Spend some time today reflecting on all Christ endured on Good Friday to accomplish His mission of saving us from our sins. Take a few minutes just to sit in that hard time and imagine what it must have been like for Him to endure all that suffering. Then take some time to thank Him for all that He has done for you and for the world!
  2. What difficult things have you gone through? How has God used them to bring joy and thankfulness into your life?
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# PRAYER

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## DISCIPLINE PRACTICE: SERVICE

It is a long-held tradition in the history of the church to fast on Good Friday. Fasting is an ancient spiritual practice that helps us to remove distraction, provides more time to prayer and Scripture, and affirms that the Lord is all we need. When we give up food (or something else, if fasting is not safe for them), it is a way of saying to God that He is our daily bread, even more important to our lives than food.

To practice fasting today, simply abstain from your regular meals. (Check with your doctor first to make sure fasting is safe for you. Fasting can be detrimental for children, nursing mothers, the sick, and the elderly. If your doctor thinks fasting is a risk, try either a modified fast of eating a vegetarian or vegan diet, or fasting from other things like television, a favorite hobby, or social media. The thing you fast from isn't as important as choosing to give up something that is an important part of your daily routine, to show God that He is your daily bread.) During the times you ordinarily would eat, spend extra time in prayer, Bible study, and meditation on the sacrifice Christ made on the cross for you.

## ADDITIONAL READING

John 18 & 19; Psalm 22; Matthew 16:24–26; Hebrews 10:16–25; 1 Peter 1:3–12





# Day 7: In the Tomb

*“Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am in distress, tears blur my eyes . . . But I am trusting you, O Lord” – Psalm 31:9, 14 NLT*

## READ: JOHN 19:38-42

When we get to Holy Saturday, the story slows down dramatically. So much happened on Good Friday, but now . . . They laid Jesus in the tomb and that was it. Because it was Friday, sundown began the observance of the Sabbath, so after burying Jesus's body, they just went home for their day of rest. We don't talk much about Holy Saturday because nothing really “happened” on that day. Peter describes Christ preaching “to those who are now dead” during that time (1 Peter 4:1–8), but here on earth, things were quiet. Sandwiched between the horror of Good Friday and the joy of Easter Sunday was a day of somber mourning. A day in the tomb.

Because we already know resurrection is coming, we tend to just skip over Holy Saturday and move straight from the cross to the empty tomb. But what if we took a day to reflect on what it must have been like for the disciples, Jesus's friends and followers, on the day before that first Easter morning?

They were likely in shock, confused, maybe even afraid for their own lives. Would Jesus's enemies chase them down now? Or, since their leader had been eliminated, would they no longer be considered a threat? Maybe they were angry or despairing or just numb. They likely had no idea what they were going to do now. For three years, their whole lives had been about Jesus. And suddenly, just like that, He was gone. But perhaps more than anything, they were grieving. They had just buried their Messiah, their rabbi, their hero, and their friend.

When we rush too quickly to Easter morning, we miss the very real feelings of the disciples and all those who loved Jesus. Joseph of Arimathea, who had been afraid to go public about his faith in Jesus, now asking Pilate if he could have Jesus's body. Nicodemus, who had come to Jesus by night out of fear of what his fellow Pharisees would think, going with Joseph to bury Jesus. He brought seventy-five pounds of myrrh and spices, much more than was needed to prepare the body. This was perhaps one hundred times costlier than the perfume Mary had anointed Jesus's feet with, a year's wage for a hundred laborers.\* Neither of them was being secretive about their devotion to Jesus any more.

Of course, we know He would rise again, but there is something to be said for sitting in the sadness. As Jesus did with Mary and Martha when Lazarus died. Jesus knew He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead in just a matter of minutes, and yet He wept with them (John 11:35). Even though He knew the end of the story, Jesus was “deeply moved in spirit and troubled” when He saw Mary's sorrow (John 11:33). It was an authentic, heart-wrenching weeping.

On this Holy Saturday, let's take a moment to be deeply moved in our spirits and troubled about the death of Jesus, at all the pain and suffering our sin has caused. Even though we know He rose

\*Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014).

again, it is still deeply troubling that He had to die first. It is deeply troubling that any of us has to die. The more literal meaning of the word for “deeply moved” is “indignant” or “moved with anger.” Jesus wasn’t just sad at Lazarus’s death, He was angry. God hates death. It was not part of His design; it is what happens as a result of sin. It is right to grieve and mourn over death, over suffering, over pain, over brokenness, over all the consequences of sin in this world. We do not grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13), but there is a time to mourn, a time to lament (Ecclesiastes 3).

Questions:

1. Take some time to reflect on the pain and the suffering in this world and to lament the brokenness and sin in this world.
2. Take some time to reflect on the ways Scripture describes God’s forgiveness. What does true forgiveness look like, practically, in our lives? How does Scripture describe those who have received God’s forgiveness?

## PRAYER

Lord God, whose blessed Son gave his body to be whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## DISCIPLINE PRACTICE: LAMENT

Some of us seem almost afraid to lament as Christians. We tend to think that if we love and trust in Jesus, then all our worship services, all our prayers, and even all our life should be happy and positive. But that is not the model of Scripture or of Jesus Himself. Did you know that over a third of the Psalms are laments? These are the songs Israel used regularly in worship; they did not shy away from expressing frustration, anger, and sorrow to the Lord. The biblical witness is to pour out our deepest, most raw emotions to God in lament, but to always end in an expression of trust (see Psalm 42 as an example.) A lament that didn’t end in turning our eyes toward God in hope and trust wouldn’t be a lament, it would be a dirge, a gripe session.

To practice lament today, share the pains of your heart openly with God—your frustrations, your sorrows, your grief, your remorse, your disappointment, your doubts. Feel free to let it all out; God can handle it. Then end your prayer in a commitment to trust in the Lord, to turn your eyes toward Him in hope.

## ADDITIONAL READING

Psalm 31; Romans 12:15–18; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 1 Peter 4:1–8



# Day 8: He is Risen!

*"You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" – Psalm 16:11*

## READ: LUKE 24:1-12

After a day of mourning, Jesus's followers received a miraculous message of hope.

The women went to the tomb early in the morning to anoint Jesus's body, but He wasn't there. Expecting to find the dead body of their beloved rabbi, instead they found an empty tomb. They were surprised, perplexed, confused. They didn't understand. Had someone taken His body? Why would someone do that? But before they could figure it out, two angels appeared.

"He is risen!"

He is not dead, He is alive!

A lot would happen over the next few months. After His resurrection, Jesus would spend some time teaching them all about the kingdom, and they would finally understand it. The Holy Spirit would come and give them wisdom, boldness, and power. The disciples would start a whole new movement that would change the world forever.

But it all started here, in this moment. At the resurrection. With these three little words—"He is Risen!"

The resurrection of Christ changes everything. If Christ was not raised, then our faith is useless (1 Corinthians 15:14–17). If Christ was not raised, the cross was a meaningless tragedy. But as Adrian Warnock wrote, "The resurrection changed the cross from a tragedy into a triumph."<sup>\*</sup>

This is why we celebrate today. Jesus changed everything. He changed tragedy into triumph. He brought us from death to life. He changed our mourning into dancing and our tears into joy. Because "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep," we will be raised too (1 Corinthians 15:20).

"The perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality . . .

Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death is your sting? . . .

Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"

– 1 Corinthians 15:53–57 (Selected Verses)

<sup>\*</sup>Adrian Warnock, *Raised with Christ: How the Resurrection Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

## PRAYER

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## DISCIPLINE PRACTICE: CELEBRATION

Join your church family or multiple church families across the world through online services to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord today. Celebrate at home with your family throughout the day. For no matter how bleak our world may look at the moment, we have this incredible hope in the promises of God because of the resurrection. Our hope is not in the world; our hope is in heaven.

