

EASTER

STUDY GUIDE



Introduction

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The HVBC Easter Devotional serves as an introduction to the celebration of Resurrection Sunday. Numerous things compete for our attention and subsequently, can lessen our focus on the significance of this season. This guide is intended to walk you through the final few moments in Christ's life as He prepared to go to the cross, died, was buried, and resurrected. Each day provides a Bible reading, a few short reflection questions, and a prompt to guide your response in prayer.

For parents, we have also provided a supplemental portion for you to use in leading your child(ren) through this same devotional. Each day will use the same Bible passage as you read, or a portion of it, along with a short overview, questions, and a prayer prompt. The family questions are designed to incrementally increase in depth of understanding and application so that you can determine which level of interaction works well for your child(ren). Each day corresponds to one of the HVBC Eggs of Easter for you to open as a family as well.

We hope and pray the Lord uses this season of reflection to draw your heart to Him and prepare you to rejoice all the more in the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Day 1:

PERSONAL STUDY

Read: John 12:12-19 and Zechariah 9:9

The people came to see the man who had raised Lazarus from the dead, thinking he could finally be their long-awaited messiah. They recognized Jesus as significant but would quickly fail to understand Him as their Savior and Lord in the ways that He intended. We can be prone toward the same error, eager to celebrate what we want from Jesus while struggling to submit to Him. Christ welcomes all who come to Him by faith - even the most sinful among us, but to receive Him at all is to receive Him in full according to His design and purposes. As we look toward the cross this week, first begin by reflecting on Christ as the true King in your life.

QUESTIONS

1. In what ways are you prone to want Jesus to serve your interests rather than submit to His plans and ways?
2. What can you celebrate and thank God for as you think about Jesus as your good and sovereign king?
3. What does worship look like in your life as you welcome Christ as your Lord and Savior?
4. Pray: Confess and repent to the Lord where you are not celebrating all of Christ's rule in your life and thank Him for what His Lordship has meant to you.

Day 1:

FAMILY STUDY

Activity: Open the first egg containing a small leaf.

Many people gathered to welcome Jesus to Jerusalem, just as the Old Testament said they would. They celebrated Jesus and hoped He would be the King they had been waiting for. To honor Jesus, they laid palm branches at His feet and shouted 'Hosanna!', which means 'save us' or 'we are saved.' The people were glad that Jesus had come!

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the crowd want to see Jesus? How did they celebrate Him?
2. Why did the people think Jesus would be their king?
3. What do you think caused the people in the crowd to go from praising Jesus this day to abandoning Him a few days later? In what ways are we sometimes like the crowd in Jerusalem?
4. Pray: Thank God for giving us Jesus to be our King forever and ask God to help you trust and follow Him all the time.

Day 2:

PERSONAL STUDY

Read: Matthew 26:6-16

(Families read Matthew 26:14-16)

Judas' betrayal of Jesus for a few coins is contrasted here with an act of extravagant worship. Even though Judas had been with Jesus for years and witnessed his power and ministry, he still did not truly see Jesus rightly. The woman, however, delighted in Christ above all else. Delighting in Christ is at the heart of true, saving faith in Him. Learning to respond to the Lord by faith and in worship is primarily about your heart growing to see Christ rightly - as wonderful and worthy of all you can give.

QUESTIONS

1. What about Jesus most stirs your affections for Him?
2. What things, like Judas and his silver, tempt you away from worship of the Lord? What ways can you work to increase your heart's delight in the Lord and see Him rightly?
3. How might you worship Christ with extravagant devotion in your own life?
4. Pray: Ask the Lord to help you see Jesus as more lovely and more glorious than you do now, that your heart would delight in Him all the more.

Day 2:

FAMILY STUDY

Activity: Open the 2nd egg containing 3 dimes.

Judas was one of Jesus' 12 disciples. He had been with Jesus for 3 years, learning from Him and watching Him perform many miracles. Even though Judas was one of the closest people to Jesus, he didn't really know Him. He didn't believe that Jesus was the Son of God. But even though Judas betrayed Jesus, God was still in control and planned to use all of this for our good.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Judas? What did he do to Jesus?
2. What was wrong with Judas that he would do this?
3. How is knowing about Jesus different than knowing Jesus? How do you know which of those describes your relationship with Him?
4. Pray: Ask God to give you His Holy Spirit to help you truly know Jesus and follow Him.

Day 3:

PERSONAL STUDY

Read: Matthew 26:26-28

Hebrews 9:13-22 tells us that the blood of goats and bulls could not cleanse us from our sin. Only the broken body and shed blood of Jesus would suffice. That means there was nothing we could do on our own, not even following the sacrifices God commanded, to remove the guilt and shame of our sin. And there are times when we continue to look at ourselves instead of Jesus, feeling good and confident when we do well and shameful and hopeless when we fail. Rather, put all your confidence in Christ to take away your sin!

QUESTIONS

1. When are you most prone to look at yourself - in pride or in shame - rather than Jesus?
2. In light of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus, bring your sin to light before the Lord through confession and repentance. There is no need to hide from Jesus!
3. How can the Lord's supper help you to remember your reason for (and have) confidence in your relationship with the Lord?
4. Pray: Thank God for providing Himself as a sufficient sacrifice for your sin.

Day 3:

FAMILY STUDY

Activity: Open the 3rd egg containing a cup.

Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples to remember that God saved the Israelites from the Egyptians in Exodus. Christians still celebrate this meal as a reminder of the final and perfect salvation Jesus provided for all of God's people. The bread and cup are symbols of Jesus' body breaking and His blood being poured out on the cross. His sacrifice paid the price for every sin of those who trust in Jesus.

QUESTIONS

1. What did the bread and cup represent?
2. Why did Jesus have to die to forgive our sins?
3. How do we celebrate the Lord's Supper today? Who should be celebrating with this meal?
4. Pray: Ask God to forgive your sins and thank Him for sending Jesus to die in your place.

Day 4:

PERSONAL STUDY

Read: Luke 22:54-62 and John 21:15-19
(Families read Luke 22:54-62)

It can be easy to both look down on Peter here as well as sympathize with him, knowing we have also betrayed Christ. Instead, we should learn from Peter's response to the conviction of sin he felt when Jesus looked up at him. Peter trusted Christ and returned to Him after His resurrection. In their interaction, Jesus graciously receives Peter without requiring anything of Him to earn his way back.

QUESTIONS

1. How do you respond when caught in sin or made aware of it? Why is that?
2. What can you learn from Peter's weeping over his sin and continued devotion to Jesus?
3. How does Jesus' response to Peter help you understand His response to you as well in the face of your own sin? How does the gospel encourage us in our sin?
4. Pray: Ask the Lord to lead you to walk in faithfulness to Christ and to give you confidence to return to Jesus when you fail, knowing He will always be welcoming.

Day 4:

FAMILY STUDY

Activity: Open the 4th egg containing a feather.

Peter was asked three times if he knew Jesus and each time he lied and said he did not. Even though Jesus told Peter ahead of time he would deny Him, Peter promised never to do it. That was a pretty hurtful thing for Peter to do to his friend. Even so, after coming back to life, Jesus saw Peter and forgave Him.

QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Peter lied and said he didn't know Jesus?
2. Can you think of a time when you lied so you wouldn't get in trouble?
3. What can we do when we have the opportunity to lie? How should we respond if we do lie?
4. Pray: Ask God to help you always tell the truth and to help you trust that He will forgive you even when you do the wrong thing.

Day 5:

PERSONAL STUDY

Read: Mark 15:6-15 and Isaiah 53:1-7

The exchange between Barabbas and Jesus gives us a clear picture of what Christ does for us as well. Isaiah tells us that though Jesus was due our praise and worship, He received our sins instead. This great exchange is the very bedrock of the gospel! Your every sin was laid on Him and He willingly received them out of His great grace and love for you. For every moment that you need reminded of God's grace and love for you, think of Barabbas! Think of Christ's substitutionary death on the cross in your place.

QUESTIONS

1. How does the exchange with Barabbas help you think clearly about the gospel?
2. What in Isaiah 53 is most encouraging to you? Most impactful?
3. In what ways can you 'apply' the substitutionary death of Christ in your place to your heart and mind when you have sinned?
4. Pray: Ask the Lord to help you trust and delight in Christ's substitutionary death on your behalf.

Day 5:

FAMILY STUDY

Activity: Open the 5th egg containing twine.

We cannot imagine what it would have been like for Jesus, who had lived perfectly in every way, to be traded for a criminal by the very people He came to save. We should have honored and worshiped Him, but instead we hated Him and sent Him to die. As awful as it was that Barabbas went free and Jesus died in His place, that is exactly what God planned so that Jesus could do for each of us who have faith in Him what He did for Barabbas. He took our sin and our punishment and let us go 'free' with His perfection.

QUESTIONS

1. What did Barabbas do? Did Jesus do anything to deserve punishment?
2. How is the switch between Barabbas and Jesus like us? How does that make you feel?
3. How can this great exchange between us and Jesus help us respond when we sin and make mistakes?
4. Pray: Thank Jesus for taking your place just like He did with Barabbas.

Day 6:

PERSONAL STUDY

Read: Luke 23:32-43

Jesus responds in two significant ways in this passage: to the soldiers who put Him on the cross and to one of the criminals who professed a measure of faith. As He was being mocked, beaten, and killed, Christ responded with an offer of grace to His tormentors. There is surely nothing we can do that He will not respond the same! And the simple faith of the criminal was faith enough to be welcomed in by Christ. Both of these exchanges offer us insight into our own assurance of pardon and welcome by Jesus.

QUESTIONS

1. What can we learn about God's eagerness to forgive us from how Jesus responds to the soldiers? What do we learn about how to forgive from this example?
2. What is the basis of Christ's promise to the criminal next to Him? How might that encourage your own assurance of salvation?
3. How can this passage help you articulate and share the gospel with others?
4. Pray: Confess to the Lord where you might look to your own good as reason to be accepted by Him and ask Him to give you assurance based on Christ alone.

Day 6:

FAMILY STUDY

Activity: Open the 6th egg containing nails.

Jesus prays to forgive the very people who are harming Him. And then He promises to save someone who had clearly done a lot of things wrong. Jesus is not ever stingy with His grace and forgiveness. In fact, He is EAGER to give it to all who will admit their need to be forgiven and trust in Jesus to save them. Jesus loves saving even the worst of sinners.

QUESTIONS

1. What does Jesus promise to the criminal on the cross? Why does He say that?
2. What can you learn about God's forgiveness for you from these verses?
3. What can you learn about forgiving others from these verses?
4. Pray: Ask God to help you trust that He really does forgive all your sin because of Jesus and to help you do the same for others.

Day 7:

PERSONAL STUDY

Read: John 19:23-24 and Psalm 22:18

There are many times when we might be tempted to doubt, when our faith feels anything but strong. Remembering the prophecies that were made about Christ can be helpful in strengthening us in those moments. Read the rest of Psalm 22 to see what all Jesus was calling to mind for those who were present at the cross when He quoted the opening line; the promises of those verses can strengthen you in many ways!

QUESTIONS

1. When are you most prone to doubt or for your faith to weaken?
2. How might the prophecies of God being fulfilled encourage you in those moments?
3. What else in Psalm 22 can strengthen your heart today as you remember that Jesus has already begun to fulfill those words?
4. Pray: Ask the Lord to strengthen your faith in Him, trusting Him to do everything He has promised.

Day 7:

FAMILY STUDY

Activity: Open the 7th egg containing dice.

Jesus actually quoted this very Psalm as He was on the cross to help everyone remember what had been promised. Some of the reasons we know we can trust in Jesus as our savior is because God did exactly what He said He would, sometimes hundreds and even thousands of years later. God always keeps His promises!

QUESTIONS

1. What did the soldiers do with Jesus' clothes?
2. Why is it important to see that Psalm 22 said this would happen?
3. How does a prophecy being fulfilled encourage your faith in Jesus?
4. Pray: Thank God for giving us His Word to see that He is faithful.

Day 8:

PERSONAL STUDY

Read: John 19:32-37 and Psalm 34:20

These things happened “that you may believe.” God leads us to faith, in part, by proving His faithfulness over time. These verses point beyond saving belief in God to our belief about God as well. He is completely sovereign over everything, down to which bones might be broken or not. The God of our salvation is the God who sits on His throne over all creation. The death of Christ was planned and orchestrated from before the foundations of the world, just as was our salvation and the work of God in your life. Everything rests in His hands and so you can trust Him with it all.

QUESTIONS

1. How is the sovereignty of God over all things encouraging to you? What might you need to actively entrust to the Lord’s care and design?
2. Where in your life might there be a disconnect between your belief in God for salvation and your trust in God during daily life?
3. Why is God’s sovereignty over every detail of Christ’s death on the cross important?
4. Pray: Ask the Lord to help you trust Him with every area of your life just as you trust Him for salvation.

Day 8:

FAMILY STUDY

Activity: Open the 8th egg containing a toothpick.

These verses are hard to read; it is sad to think about all of this happening to Jesus. And yet there is reason here for us to hope - in addition to Jesus saving us! In order for God to keep specific and detailed promises from hundreds of years before, He has to be in total control of all those details. There is nothing in all of creation that God is not in charge of and ruling over. There is nothing in your life that God is overlooking!

QUESTIONS

1. What did the soldiers do to Jesus?
2. Like yesterday's verses, how does this promise coming true help us to know that even the smallest details surrounding the death of Jesus were part of God's plan?
3. How can we be encouraged in our daily lives knowing God is in control of even the smallest of details?
4. Pray: Ask God to help you have peace because you know He is in control of even the smallest details of our lives

Day 9:

PERSONAL STUDY

**Read: Read Matthew 27:50-53 and Hebrews 9
(Families read Matthew 27:50-53)**

We have no right to know the Lord but through Christ. And because of Christ we have full and complete access to the Lord! No priest or mediator is needed and no additional sacrifices or standards of perfection are required. Jesus Himself is your great high priest and a sufficient sacrifice, that you may be truly and fully reconciled to God.

QUESTIONS

1. Are there ever times when you feel like you have to prove your way into a relationship with the Lord? Why do you feel that way?
2. What is the impact in your heart and mind of knowing the veil was torn at the death of Jesus?
3. What does it mean for you that Christ has made you righteous even now?
4. Pray: Confess to the Lord where you feel unrighteous and unworthy and ask Him to help your heart hold fast to the truth that Jesus has truly cleansed you once and for all.

Day 9:

FAMILY STUDY

Activity: Open the 9th egg containing purple cloth.

The curtain separated the most holy place in the temple from where people could go. No one was allowed behind the curtain into the presence of God, except for the high priest once per year under very special circumstances. When Jesus died, He made it so that all God's people could know Him and have a relationship with Him. Not once a year, but all the time and forever!

QUESTIONS

1. What happened with the curtain in the temple when Jesus died? What did the curtain do?
2. How can we have a relationship with God now?
3. Why is it important that we can know God all the time and forever because of Jesus?
4. Pray: Thank God that you can pray to Him and know Him without a priest because of Jesus.

Day 10:

PERSONAL STUDY

Read: Luke 23:50-56 and Romans 3:25-26

Jesus was obedient to the point of dying on a cross. He humbled Himself in every way that our curse and punishment of sin would be laid upon Him in the fullest possible way. The death of Christ is foundational to our faith, for by it we see the height of God's love for us as well as God's perfect righteousness in His just punishment of sin. The cross of Christ proves the character and nature of God to us, as well as who we are because of Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. How does the death of Christ help you to understand both the love and righteousness of God?
2. When are you most in need of remembering the love and righteousness of God in your life and how can you grow in looking to the cross as an 'ebenezer' of those truths?
3. Pray: Ask God to help you know more fully His hatred of sin and His love for you that led Jesus to willingly suffer even unto death on your behalf.

Day 10:

FAMILY STUDY

Activity: Open the 10th egg containing gauze with oil.

When Adam and Eve first sinned, God told them that the consequence of their sin was death - for them and for every living thing. When Jesus died and was buried, He was taking on the punishment for all the sins of those who belong to Him. Jesus kept His promise to punish sin through death and Jesus showed His love for us by taking that punishment on Himself. In the death of Jesus we see that God really does hate sin and will punish it and we get to see that God really does love us as much as He says he does.

QUESTIONS

1. What happened to Jesus on the cross? What did people do with His body?
2. Why did Jesus have to die?
3. How does the death of Jesus show you God's love?
4. Pray: Ask God to help you hate sin just like Him and to help you know His love for you through faith in Jesus.

Day 11:

PERSONAL STUDY

Read: Matthew 27:62-66

Everything had gone just as Christ told them it would, but still the disciples surely felt deeply unsettled. The one they confessed as God and Savior was lying lifeless in a tomb. Following God can often cause us to feel unsettled. Even though He told us the road would be narrow and often difficult, it is a whole other thing to experience that personally. This Sabbath day of waiting between the cross and the resurrection teaches us that God is at work even when we cannot always see or understand it, and to instead trust in Him and His promises.

QUESTIONS

1. When have you felt unsure about God's work or timing? How did you respond?
2. In what ways can this day of silence from God help you learn to trust Him?
3. What areas of your life do you need to entrust to the Lord right now?
4. Pray: Cast your anxieties on to the Lord because He cares for you and is a good and sovereign Lord.

Day 11:

FAMILY STUDY

Activity: Open the 11th egg containing a rock.

The Roman soldiers sealed the tomb of Jesus with a large stone and put soldiers there to guard it. They were nervous and unsure of what might happen. The disciples of Jesus were probably also unsure of what was happening. This man they had trusted and followed (and believed was God!) was lying dead in a tomb. What did all of this mean? What were they supposed to do? Everyone was watching and waiting to see what God would do next.

QUESTIONS

1. What was placed outside Jesus' tomb? Why?
2. How do you think the disciples were feeling on that day?
When do you feel that way?
3. How should you respond when you feel like that?
4. Pray: Tell God times when you feel anxious or scared and ask Him to help you trust Him during those moments.

Day 12:

PERSONAL STUDY

Read: Matthew 28:1-10

The resurrection of Christ is what frees us from fear, as the angel told these women when they saw him. The schemes of satan and death itself could not hold back the promises and power of God. In His resurrection, Jesus assures you of your own resurrection, justification, and eternal redemption. We stand in confident hope on these promises because Christ stood in triumph that first Easter morning. Christ the Lord is risen, indeed! Hallelujah!

QUESTIONS

1. The resurrection of Christ turns our fears into joy. Where do you see that happening in your life?
2. How can you respond to Christ in worship today like the women in these verses?
3. What promises of God should you be confident in because of the resurrection of Christ? Name as many as you can think of and give thanks to Him that they are true and trustworthy.
4. Pray: Ask God to lead you to worship Jesus and to give you joy in Him!

Day 12:

FAMILY STUDY

Activity: Open the 12th egg.

These women had come to see Jesus' tomb but instead found an angel who told them that Jesus was no longer there. He had been raised back to life just like He promised! And everyone who repents of their sin and has faith in Jesus to save them will also have everlasting life, just like Him! That is wonderful news and is the very reason that we are able to be free from our fear.

QUESTIONS

1. What happened on Easter morning? What did the women find at the tomb?
2. How did the women react to seeing Jesus? How can we do the same today?
3. Why is Jesus being brought to life such good news? Why does it matter?
4. Pray: Thank God for raising Christ to life and giving the same gift to all who believe in Him. Ask God to help you worship Jesus and to trust in Him that you, too, can have eternal life.

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