

# *The Story of* **Easter**

**FAMILY READING AND DISCUSSION GUIDE**

for

*Holy Week*

Including

**EASTER STORY COOKIES**

and a special section on

**SALVATION AND BAPTISM**



# HOLY WEEK

## Family Reading and Discussion Guide

### Pre-Reading

#### FRIDAY (BEFORE PALM SUNDAY)— JESUS ARRIVES IN BETHANY

John 12:1-11

Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover to spend some time with Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. This is where Mary anoints Jesus' feet with expensive perfume to indicate her devotion to and willingness to serve Jesus.

## HOLY WEEK BEGINS

### Day 1

#### PALM SUNDAY—THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF JESUS

Mark 11:1-11; Zechariah 9:9

*Additional Reading* Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-19

On the Sunday before Crucifixion, Jesus went into Jerusalem on a colt, fulfilling prophecy from Zechariah 9:9. He was welcomed by the crowd with the word "Hosanna," which means *save now*. This word was a standard shout of praise, as you see in Psalm 118:25-26. By shouting "Hosanna," the people were publicly acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah.



Why do you think it was important the colt had never been ridden?

*\*Objects used for sacred purposes must never have been used for any other reason than their sacred purpose. This shows us Jesus was the only one to have ever ridden it*

Why do we call this day "Palm Sunday?"

*\*Because they fanned Jesus with palm leaves*

### Day 2

#### MONDAY—CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

Matthew 21:10-22

*Additional Reading* Mark 11:12-2; Luke 19:45-48; John 12:20-50

On this day, Jesus returned to the temple and found it to be full of money changer, which were those who were committing fraud. There is evidence that the priests were benefitting financially by these merchants committing dishonest business transactions. Jesus drove these people out for disrespecting the temple. The chief priests and teachers of the law overheard this and began looking for a way to kill him because they feared him.



Jesus says our body is a temple (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). What are some things we can do to honor our temple?



## Day 3

### TUESDAY—DAY OF CONTROVERSY & PARABLES

Matthew 21:18-24:51

*Additional Reading* Mark 11:27-13:37; Luke 20:1-21:36

The religious authorities, also called Pharisees, tried to trap Jesus when they questioned him. Jesus uses parables to warn people against the Pharisees and to teach important lessons to the people.



Why do you think Jesus spoke in parables?

*\*It's easier to understand parables because it illustrates what's happening in the spiritual world by using stories from the physical world.*

Is it sometimes hard to do the right thing? Why is it sometimes hard?

*\*This is a great time to begin talking about sin and how we have fleshly desires that sometimes cause us to want to do the wrong things. That's what makes us different than God. That's what separates us. As you go through the next days, you can begin to go more in depth to lead you into talk of salvation.*

## Day 4

### WEDNESDAY—POSSIBLE DAY OF REST

The scriptures do not mention this day. Mark 14:1 indicates another day where scripture records nothing.



You can take time today to plan a Passover feast to have with your family tomorrow. Some ideas for your feast: unleavened bread or crackers, meat that's been cooked over fire (we prefer brisket and chicken although scripture uses lamb), fruit, wine or grape juice (my kids like sparkling grape juice), hard boiled eggs, jam/jelly, nuts, various herbs, parsley or another green vegetable. We also add lots of cheeses and make it like an oversized charcuterie board.

## Day 5

### THURSDAY—PREPARATION OF PASSOVER, PASSOVER, & WASHING OF DISCIPLES FEET

Matthew 26:17-30; John 13:1-30

*Additional Reading* Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23

Jesus shows his servanthood by washing the disciples' feet prior to the Last Supper. Jesus gives a new meaning to the Passover meal with the loaf of bread and cup of wine representing his body soon to be sacrificed and his blood soon to be shed. The Last Supper became The Lord's Supper.



You could take this time to wash each other's feet and explain the meaning behind Jesus lowering himself to wash the disciples' feet. It's a humbling experience.

We like to take communion as a family when we reach that scripture.



## Day 6

### GOOD FRIDAY—CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS CHRIST

Matthew 26:36-27:56

*Additional Reading* Mark 15:1-47; Luke 22:66-23:56; John 18:28-19:37

After the Passover meal, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane, where he prayed and cried out to God the Father about what was ahead for him. Following betrayal, arrest, being deserted, false trials, denial, condemnation, severe beatings and teasing/mockery, Jesus was required to carry his cross to Golgotha, also called The Place of the Skull.



Why did Jesus cry out when he prayed?

*\*He was afraid. Fear didn't exist until sin entered in the Garden of Eden. As Jesus takes on the sin of all of us, he begins to feel fear for what is to come.*

Why did Jesus have to die on the cross? Why didn't he just use his power to overtake them all?

*\*He could have easily done that, but he knew this act was the only way you and I could live eternity with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is so holy that he cannot be in the presence of sin. This is why the moment of the first sin in the Garden of Eden caused a separation between us and God.*

Take a moment today to reflect on what happened on that day, and ask your child how he feels about this. Keep in mind each child is different and will respond differently. There is no right or wrong answer when it comes to how this makes them feel.

## Day 7

### HOLY SATURDAY—JESUS IN THE TOMB

Matthew 27:57-66

*Additional Reading* Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42

On this Sabbath day, Jesus' body laid alone in the tomb. Scripture is silent about this day.



This is the day we do our Easter Story Cookies. You can find the instructions at the end of this guide.



Day 8

## EASTER SUNDAY—THE RESURRECTION

Matthew 28:1-13

*Additional Reading* Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-49; John 20:1-31

He is risen! The tomb is empty! The women went early in the morning to the tomb and found that the stone was no longer over the entrance to the tomb. Although it weighed much more than a single person could carry, it had been rolled away, and an angel told them to go tell the disciples Jesus had risen.



Why do we throw a party on this day?

*\*Because we are celebrating that Jesus rose from the grave.*

Why is it important that he didn't stay dead in the tomb?

*\*Prophecy said the Messiah would one day die and come back 3 days later. This proved he was the Messiah. Because he rose from the dead, we know he is the Lord and Savior that took on all of our sins in order for us to live forever with him in Heaven. All we have to do is go to him and ask for forgiveness for our sins and trust him as our Lord to accept his free gift of salvation.*

This is the perfect time to take out the Easter Story Cookies if you did them last night.



# Easter Story Cookies



This is our favorite thing to do on the Saturday before Easter. As you make them, you'll walk through the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. This is great for the littlest of kiddos to the grown-up kiddos. We've done this tradition since my oldest was itty bitty, and we still do it today with our teenagers. It's something they enjoy each year.

## Ingredients:

1 cup whole pecans	Pinch of salt
Quart-sized zipper bag	1 cup sugar
Wooden Spoon	6-ounce package chocolate chips
1 teaspoon vinegar	Tape
3 egg whites	Bible

1 Preheat oven 300 degrees

2 Place pecans in zipper bag

- Let the children beat the pecans with a wooden spoon to break them into small pieces. We give each kids their own spoon and bag and separate the pecans out between them because this is their favorite part.
- Read John 19:1-3
- Explain to them that after Jesus was arrested, He was beaten by the Roman soldiers.

3 Pour vinegar on a sponge, a napkin, or pour a little into a small cup or spoon. Then, pass the sponge around and let the children smell the vinegar. If anyone is brave, let them have a small taste.

- Pour 1 teaspoon of vinegar into a mixing bowl.
- Read John 19:28-30
- Explain that when Jesus was thirsty on the cross, they only gave him a rag soaked in vinegar to drink. Imagine how that would feel going into the open wounds that might be on his lips. His lips are likely very chapped.

4 Add egg whites to the vinegar.

- Read John 10:10-11
- Eggs represent life. Explain that Jesus died so we can live forever.

5 Sprinkle a little salt into each child's hand. Let them taste it, and then put a pinch of salt into the bowl.

- Read Luke 23:27
- Explain the salt represents the salty tears shed by Jesus' followers.



6 Add 1 cup of sugar to the bowl.

- Read John 3:16
- Explain the sweetest part of this story is that Jesus died because he loves us.

7 Beat with a mixer on high speed for 12 to 15 minutes until stiff peaks form.

- While the mixer is going you can read Isaiah 1:18
- Let them look in the bowl at how white and fluffy it is. Explain the color white represents the purity of Jesus.
- Fold in the broken nuts and chocolate chips.
- As the white mixture covers the nuts and chips, explain that if we believe in Jesus, He will forgive and cover all of our sins making us white as the pure snow.

8 Let each kid drop the teaspoonfuls onto a wax paper-covered cookie sheet.

- Read Matthew 27:57-60
- Explain that each mound represents the rocky tomb where Jesus' body was laid.

9 Place the cookie sheet in the oven, close the door, and turn the oven off.

- Read Matthew 27:65-66
- Give each child a piece of tape to symbolically seal the oven door.
- Explain that Jesus' tomb was sealed.

10 Leave it overnight

- Read John 16:20, 22
- Like Jesus' followers felt sad when they left Jesus lying in the tomb, they may feel a little sad leaving the cookies in the oven without getting to taste them yet.



11 **HAPPY EASTER!** Gather the children around and let them all remove their "seal."

- Read Matthew 28:1-6
- Give everyone a cookie to take a bite. Make sure they notice the cookies are hollow.
- Remind them that on that first Easter day, the women went to the tomb only to find it was empty just like the cookies.



## BONUS SECTION



The decision a person makes to ask Christ into their heart, whether young or old, is a decision that can't be forced or rushed. It's all in God's timing and as the Holy Spirit speaks to them.

Maybe your child has started showing interest and asking questions. The following section consists of tools to help you answer those questions confidently.



# SALVATION AND BAPTISM



## WHO IS JESUS?

Jesus is God's son.

*Read John 3:16-17 together.*

## WHAT IS SIN?

We sin when we disobey God. Sin is anything you say, think, or do that goes against what God says. It is an action that does not reflect God's character.

*Read Romans 3:23 together.*

This scripture means that we must all realize that we are sinners, and we need forgiveness in order to have a relationship with God.

Note: As your child learns to articulate ways in which he/she has sinned, it will help them have a clear understanding of sin and thus understand how to repent and receive his forgiveness.

## WHAT DOES SIN DO?

It separates us from God.

*Read Isaiah 59:2 together.*

Another word for "iniquities" is sin.

## WHY DID JESUS DIE ON THE CROSS?

Jesus died on the cross so that we can have forgiveness for our sins and live in Heaven with him forever. Because he died on the cross, he can take away the separation caused by our sins. He died and was buried but rose again on the third day!

*Read Romans 6:23 together.*

This scripture says if we remain sinners, we will die. However, if we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and repent of our sins, we will live forever in Heaven with God.

*Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 together.*

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE PRAY AND ASK GOD TO FORGIVE US FOR OUR SINS?

When we pray and ask God for forgiveness and trust in His son, Jesus, God will forgive you.

*Read 1 John 1:9 and Psalm 103:12 together.*

It's as easy as believing, confessing our sins to God (saying them out loud), and asking for forgiveness.

God forgives us, and he never remembers them because it takes them away and makes us "clean" again.

Note: The Bible teaches us that when we declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved. From this moment on, after we pray to receive salvation, Christ comes to live in our hearts forever. When we do sin, we need to acknowledge what we did, confess it and repent. The word "repent" means to turn and do the opposite of whatever you did when you sinned. Repentance is an ongoing process that you have to choose to do every time you sin.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO RECEIVE CHRIST AS YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR?

**Romans 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9-10**

It means you understand Jesus is God's son who came to live as man and died on the cross for your sins. Because he did this, you know you can ask for forgiveness for your sins (those things you do that you're not supposed to do), and God will forgive you. To receive Christ as your Lord and Savior means that you believe this and want to be obedient to live the way God wants you to live. It means you have prayed to be forgiven of the things you've done wrong and have asked Jesus to be a part of your life forever.

## DOES THIS MEAN IT'S OKAY TO KEEP SINNING?

**Romans 6:1-2**

No. When we decide to accept Christ into our hearts, we are saying we want to obey him and become more like him. We know we aren't perfect and will sin in the future, but we want to try our hardest not to. It's important to realize living a life for Christ isn't about following rules just because we *have* to; it's about *wanting* to follow rules because we want to be closer to God.

## IS SALVATION AND BAPTISM THE SAME THING?

No. Salvation is another way of saying that you've received Christ as your Lord and Savior. This is the act of asking God to live in your heart. Baptism is what you do after you receive Christ into your heart.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BAPTIZED?

Baptism shows others that you made that decision to follow Jesus. It represents your sins being washed away and making you clean.

## WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

Jesus was baptized to show us that we should also be baptized. Read Matthew 3:13-17 with him or her. These verses talk about Jesus being baptized and how we should follow his example.



Feel free to send any questions, feedback, or personal stories!  
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