



Little Rock Church Student Ministry

# **Journey to the Cross**

**A Holy Week  
Family Devotional**

# INTRODUCTION

*“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*

Hebrews 12:2-3

Welcome to *Journey to the Cross: A Family Devotional*. These devotionals are based on a prayer experience, Stations of the Cross, your students participated in this past Wednesday night at Refuge. They’ve been adapted so that you can take time as a family throughout Holy Week to reflect on the final week of the life of Christ.

Take time each day to read the Scripture, reflection and discuss the questions. Whether at home, sitting in the living room, gathering in the morning, find a few minutes of time to consider our Lord and Savior. May you find yourself in this story and grow in your relationship with our Lord as you meditate on these things.

## DAILY READINGS

<b>Day</b>	<b>Text</b>	<b>Event</b>
Sunday	Matthew 26: 6-13	Mary anoints Jesus
Monday	Matthew 26: 14-16	Judas agrees to betray Jesus
Tuesday	Matthew 26:17-35	The last supper
Wednesday	Matthew 26:36-46	In Gethsemane
Thursday	Matthew 26: 47-75	Jesus’ arrest and trial
Friday	Matthew 27:11-56	The cross
Saturday	Matthew 27:57-66	Silence
Sunday:	Matthew 28:1-20	Jesus’ resurrection

## SUNDAY

## MARY ANOINTS JESUS

**Read:** Matthew 26:6-13

**Reflection:** *This is one of the earliest events described in Jesus' final days. Earlier Jesus had entered Bethany to the cheers and adoration of the people. In this scene he was in the home of a man overlooked by most of society, a man called Simon the Leper. In an act of worship a woman (identified by another Gospel writer as Mary) poured expensive perfume onto Jesus' feet. Spontaneous... passionate... real... expensive... extravagant... pure are just a few words describing this act of worship. And it touched the heart of Jesus. Jesus knew he was headed to the cross, and Mary's act of worship was a blessing to him.*

*Her worship seemed over the top to some, yet pleasing to Jesus. Her worship was an outpouring of her love for Jesus.*

### Questions to discuss:

1. Describe the most costly gift you've given someone. It doesn't have to be expensive. It could be something that took a great deal of time to prepare. Maybe you put a lot of thought into the gift. What was the occasion? What made that gift so meaningful?
2. How is worshipping Jesus like giving a costly gift?
3. How can you, like Mary, worship Jesus extravagantly in a way that spreads the beautiful fragrance of Jesus where you are?

## MONDAY

## JUDAS AGREES TO BETRAY JESUS

**Read:** Read Matthew 26:14-16

**Reflection:** *Judas, one of Jesus' 12 closest disciples, agreed to betray his friend for the equivalent of three month's salary. He spent three years with Jesus. He saw the miracles, he listened to the teachings, but something changed within him. I wonder what he saw and felt. I wonder what expectations he had of Jesus and his movement. I wonder what led Judas to this betrayal. It wasn't a sudden, impulsive decision. Disappointment, frustration, unmet expectations, anger, and disillusionment must have been building for quite some time reaching a boiling point. I wonder if his confidence in Jesus and this movement he was leading began to erode. I wonder if Judas saw an opportunity to look after himself. I wonder what Judas felt as he held the coins in his hands.*

### Questions to discuss:

1. Discuss Judas' betrayal. What do you believe led Judas to betray Jesus?
2. Many who read these verses are quick to judge Judas harshly for his betrayal. Why is that?
3. What are ways we betray Jesus today?

## TUESDAY

## THE LAST SUPPER

**Read:** Matthew 26:36-46

**Reflection:** *The scene above reflects the sorrow Jesus experienced in Gethsemane. The cup represents that which the Father was asking Jesus to do. The cup Jesus was asked to drink led to a cross. Three times he asked to not drink the cup. In the end, he chose to drink the cup, follow the will of his Father.*

*Like Jesus, we are handed a cup by the Father. Sometimes the cup is filled with drink that is sweet and easy to swallow. These are things we enjoy doing for our heavenly Father; but often it's bitter and we're not sure we want it. We don't get to choose what's in the cup. Our only choice is whether or not to drink from it.*

*Your cup could be the circumstances in which you live. It might be something the Lord is asking you to do. Maybe he's asking you to be baptized; calling you to share your faith with a friend; challenging you to step up in leadership in youth group or some place else. What is God asking you to do? Daily, in some way you face the same question Jesus was asked, "Will you drink the cup?" Are you willing to do your Heavenly Father's will?*

### **Questions to discuss:**

1. What choices have you faced where you know that what you wanted was in conflict with what God would want for you?
2. Is there something you know God is calling you to do, but you're not sure you want to do it?
3. What's there to gain from doing God's will over our own? What's there to lose? Why should we surrender to God's will over our own?

## WEDNESDAY

## GETHSEMANE

**Read:** Matthew 26:17-35

**Reflection::** *Jesus was surrounded by his closest friends at the Passover. At this meal were tax collectors, brothers, cousins, fishermen, and even one who would betray him. Jesus chose to share his final moments with those closest to him, no matter who or what they had done, or what they were about to do. He knew there'd be confusion over what was about to happen. He knew the road ahead would be tough for him. So, he took bread and said, "This is MY body." No matter who they are or what they had done they would forever be joined together by the body of Jesus. The bread was a powerful reminder that in the midst of chaos and confusion, uncertainty and fear, the one things that unites us giving us strength is Christ himself. As we eat bread we're reminded that all are part of the same body.*

### **Questions to discuss:**

1. Imagine the emotions the night Christ must have felt. He knew Judas was going to have him arrested. He knew Peter would deny every knowing him. He knew he was about to suffer. Yet he wanted to be with this group. Discuss what you think Jesus might have felt in that moment.
2. To you personally, what does it mean to be part of the body of Christ?

**Read:** Matthew 26:47-75

**Reflection 1:** *Even though Jesus could have given the word and overpowered the guards, he let himself be bound and led away. He could have taken his own path, made his own choice, and ended it all right there. But, he deferred to his Father's plan embracing the difficult path, the only path that would truly bring redemption and freedom to all people for all time. Knowing ultimately this path was the only path to truly bring God's plan to fulfillment.*

*He was no criminal. He healed people, brought hope to others, and taught others about God. Yet, he was treated as a criminal. Most amazingly, he allowed this to happen. Take a few minutes to silently reflect on Jesus' willingness to endure this. Imagine the series of choices Jesus made leading him to this moment. Every choice moved him toward this time and place. So many times he could have chosen differently, but he didn't. Instead, he chose the path of obedience. The path that would fulfill his Father's plans and purposes. Every day you have a choice to make. Will you choose the path fulfilling God's purposes for your life, or your own?*

**Questions to discuss:**

1. When treated unfairly how do you tend to respond?
2. What encouragement do you get from Jesus in order to help you endure moment when treated unfairly?
3. Jesus' path led him to die. He had a choice in that moment to opt out, but chose not to. He chose obedience to his Father. Because of that obedience we are blessed today. Every day you make choices whether or not to be obedient to your heavenly Father. Consider this: your choices may bless others. How might your obedience to God bless others?

**Reflection 2:** *Peter watched these events unfold. Put yourself in his shoes. Hiding in the shadows, watching, wondering what is going to happen. You know Jesus is being unjustly accused. He's committed no crime. He's being mocked and insulted. You overhear men telling lies about him. The man you've given three years of your life to, the one you left home for, put all your hope in, is now being sentenced to death.*

*In your heart you believe he was the long awaited Messiah. You know he's the one! Now you're world is crashing down on this Good Friday. It wasn't supposed to end like this. His life... your life wasn't supposed to take this turn. It's all wrong. Doubt and confusion replace hope and promise. You're afraid, but you don't want to leave so you remain in the shadows at a distance. To make matters worse, you wrestle with the guilt of denying you know him!*

*There are times when things didn't go as expected even when we've done our best to follow Jesus. We are left in the shadows wondering what happened. Have there been times when you've been disappointed in God or confused because things didn't go as planned?*

**Questions to discuss:**

1. Describe moments when following Jesus has led to confusion and perhaps disappointment. What happened? Thinking back on those times, what led you to continue to put your trust in him?
2. Have you ever experienced disappointment with God? Are there things you imagine saying to Jesus in that moment. What would you want to say to him?
3. Now, imagine what Jesus might want to say to you if he could look you in the eye at that moment.

## FRIDAY THE CROSS

**Read:** Matthew 27:11-56

**Reflection:** *Crucifixions were public spectacles. It wasn't uncommon for a parade of people to follow the convicted through the streets of their place of execution. It was part of the humiliation. Interested parties would watch this scene unfold. The whole point was not only to carry out the execution, but to completely and utterly dehumanize the guilty person. Jesus was no exception... except in his case, someone was compelled to participate. After being up all night, beaten, bloody, insulted, deprived of sleep, food and water, the weight of the cross must have been overwhelming. When Jesus could no longer physically carry his cross, a man visiting was made to carry it. He wasn't invited. He was coerced. He had to bear the weight of that cross for Jesus.*

*Before dying Jesus told his followers they would have to take up their own cross. I wonder if those who were watching remembered his words. I wonder if they began to understand what Jesus meant. For Simon, it meant putting aside his agenda for the day. Simon had other plans, but was forced to carry Jesus' cross. Sometimes, following Jesus means just that... we have to change our plans.*

### Questions to discuss:

1. I wonder what Simon thought and felt as he was forced by Roman soldiers to participate in Jesus' suffering. What can you imagine Simon must have thought or felt?
2. About 50 years after this event Paul wrote to Christians in Corinth about his own suffering. He wrote, "For just as [I] share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also [my] comfort abounds in Christ." How do we participate in suffering with Christ?
3. Following Jesus may one day mean you need to change your plans. In fact, it may already mean you need to put aside your own agenda. What might need to change in your life?

## SATURDAY SILENCE

**Read:** Matthew 27:57-66

**Reflection:** *When the Roman governor rolled the enormous rock sealing Jesus' tomb. When he put his personal seal on the tomb so that no one would open it. When he placed two guards at the tomb to make sure no one would open the tomb all hope must have seemed lost. With that final act all the disciples' hopes and dreams were crushed. What was going to happen next? To whom would they go? Would they just return to their previous careers? Where would they go? Imagine the hopeless feeling of Jesus' disciples as that stone was put into place.*

### Questions to discuss:

1. Describe a time you felt like you were in a period of spiritual darkness or felt a sense of hopelessness. How did Christ bring light into that moment?
2. Where do you see darkness and hopelessness in our worlds today? Spend time as a family praying about the hopelessness you see. As you pray, may you be moved to participate with God in bring light into those places.

# SUNDAY JESUS' RESURRECTION

**Read:** Matthew 28:1-10

**Reflection:** *Imagine the cold, heavy, anxious fear and sorrow these women felt as they journeyed toward the tomb that day. Imagine what they were thinking and feeling. Imagine them arriving at the tomb and finding the stone rolled away, the empty grave clothes in place where Jesus' body was supposed to be. Imagine the shock and overwhelming joy they felt as they met the risen Christ in the garden. Their Lord was alive! Imagine how these women were transformed in that moment.*

*Their Lord, our Lord is alive. He has risen and is returning. Everything has been changed. Everything is becoming new. How might the risen Lord transform your life?*

**Personal reflection:** Before you are several black and white pictures. Which ones seem to evoke the greatest sense of hopelessness to you? Select one picture that represents a sense of hopelessness to you personally. What is it about that picture that seems so hopeless?

**Questions to discuss:**

1. Imagine what it must have been like for the two who discovered the stone moved out of the way and the tomb empty. Their hopelessness was transformed into joy. The risen Jesus changed their lives forever. They would no longer be the same. Peter, the one who denied Jesus three times, would preach to the very same crowd just weeks later.
2. Spend some time talking about how Jesus transforms people's lives today. *How do you think the risen Jesus wants to transform you today?*