

HOLY WEEK GUIDE

WHAT

Celebrating Holy Week is an invitation to enter into the victory of Christ. In a matter of days, Jesus was praised as King, betrayed by friends, nailed to a cross, buried in a borrowed tomb - and three days later, He walked out alive. This is the week that changed everything.

As you accept the invitation to immerse yourself into the story of Jesus, commit to the time and effort that it will take to intimately consider His experience. As you do so, the Holy Spirit will lead you to prayerful reflection, intentional conviction, and lasting transformation.

Through Scripture, devotional thoughts, and guided prayer designed to slow you down and anchor your heart, you will be prepared for the weight of Friday and the triumph of Sunday.

As we are invited into the story of Christ this week, we will be considering the book of Matthew and its account of Holy Week:

Palm Sunday	The Arrival of Jesus	Matthew 21:1-17
Holy Monday	The Desire of Jesus	Matthew 21:18-22
Holy Tuesday	The Teachings of Jesus	Matthew 21:23-25:46
Holy Wednesday	The Anointing of Jesus	Matthew 26:1-16
Maundy Thursday	The Sacrifice of Jesus	Matthew 26:17-55
Good Friday	The Defeat of Jesus	Matthew 26:57-27:61
Silent Saturday	The Silence of Jesus	Matthew 27:62-66
Resurrection Sunday	The Victory of Jesus	Matthew 28:1-15

HOLY

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Holy Week is also an opportunity to view your life in light of Christ's sacrifice and triumph. When we choose to align our lives with the reality of Christ, His story becomes our story and His experience becomes our experience.

Slow down. Step in. Walk with Jesus from the shouts of Hosanna to the silence of the tomb, and from the darkness of Friday to the dawn of Sunday. Let His suffering confront you. Let His silence search you. Let His victory define you.

The King has won. Now live in His victory.

You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

Colossians 2:13-15



WEEK?



PALM SUNDAY

Reading Prompt: Matthew 21:1-17

Devotional

The prophets had spoken. The people were longing and looking for a king. Anticipation was in the air. Could Jesus be the One? In a short time, this crowd would chant “crucify Him.” Today, they shout “Hosanna!” Humbly riding on a donkey, the King of kings enters the city ready to wage war. His sight was not set on Rome; His revolution would be spiritual. Jesus went straight to the Temple and began to clean house. With the authority and power of heaven, He took His stand. The stage was set. It would be a week that would thunder through eternity. It would be a Holy Week.

Devotional Cont.

For two thousand years, Christians have observed and celebrated the events of Holy Week. If you are new to faith, your blessing is to explore all that Jesus did and said leading to Resurrection Sunday with fresh eyes and an open heart. For those who are familiar, the invitation is to approach this week with a renewed intentionality, ready to be immersed again in the beauty and power of the Gospel.

Prayer Prompt

Pray over the week. Ask God to give you a fresh perspective and deep appreciation for all that Jesus said and did during this Holy Week. Prayerfully decide to make space for Him each day. Worship Him today as the triumphant King.

Action Item

As you consider the upcoming week, think through when and where you will make space for Jesus each day. Mark out a time and make a plan. Be intentional. Make holy space in a holy week for a Holy King.

Additional Scriptures

Isaiah 62:11

Zechariah 9:9

Isaiah 56:7

Jeremiah 7:11

Reading Prompt: *Matthew 21:18-22*

Devotional

In the wintertime, fig trees go dormant and drop all of their leaves. As spring arrives, the tree produces new leaves and small, pea-sized fruit, unlike the summer's large, sweet fruit. The spring crop was considered food for travelers or the poor. The tree that Jesus and the disciples encountered had leaves that advertised that it had fruit, but when they got up close, they could see it was unfruitful.

Jesus is using this tree to teach his disciples about their experience in the temple (Matt 20:12-17). They just observed those who had the outward signs of religion but lacked the fruit of genuine righteousness and faith. Their worship was empty. Jesus wants disciples who bear fruit and respond to God in faith, not wavering in doubt. This isn't about the power of positive thinking, or a blank check for God to answer any prayer. Jesus is talking about a total alignment of the human will with God's power.

We all must battle the tendency to read our Bible, attend church, or even serve on a team, but not allow Jesus to change us to be like Him. To call ourselves Christians but not have any of the fruit of the Spirit as evidence! The cry of our hearts should be a deep relationship with God, the One who holds the power to move mountains.

Prayer Prompt

Pray to the Father, asking Him to reveal areas of your life that need to become more fruitful. Then pray with faith over that change. Ask Him without doubting and believe that He can do the impossible!

Action Item

Be watchful today of your reaction to circumstances. Each time you are tempted to doubt, instead take a moment to bring that to God in prayer.



HOLY MONDAY

Additional Scriptures

Mark 11:1-11

Jeremiah 8:13

Galatians 5:22



HOLY TUESDAY

Reading Prompt: Matthew 21:23-25:46

Devotional

Jesus addresses the religious leaders and the surrounding crowds, speaking boldly and without the restraint shown earlier in the Gospels. He no longer has to hold back lest the religious leaders come for Him too soon. Now is the time!

What did Jesus teach and proclaim on one of His final days? Here's a quick, not exhaustive list:

- The Kingdom of God is for those who produce fruit, even if they don't appear worthy on the outside. Beware of merely putting on the appearance of fruit, like the fig tree and the Pharisees.
- Loving God and loving people is the only way to live that fulfills God's commandments.
- The Lord is coming. Keep watch! Be prepared! What is done while waiting has eternal significance.

Devotional Cont.

A common thread throughout Jesus' words on this momentous day is the importance of our actions. We are not to be people of words or appearance only. Our actions must back up what we show and say to the world and to God. It is with our actions that we prove our love for God and for people. And it is what we do here and now that reveals how ready we are for Jesus' return. Not only that, but what we do with what we have been given—our time, abilities, resources, every ounce of this life—matters for eternity.

It's obvious that Jesus cares deeply about our actions and how we live—so much so that it is a focus of one of His final days. This leads us to seriously and honestly ask: Does He care more deeply about how we live than we do?

Prayer Prompt

Offer this question to God: Lord, do you care more deeply about my actions and how I live than I do? Show me where that is true, and help me change it.

Action Item

From your time in prayer, list one or two physical, tangible things that need to change in your life. Start small. Start with something that can be changed today.

Additional Scriptures

Psalm 118:22-26

Reading Prompt: *Matthew 26:1-16*

Devotional

On Holy Wednesday, Jesus and his disciples return to Bethany for the evening and experience the joyful service of a woman who is prepared to give her greatest treasure to Jesus. Jesus sees it as wholehearted worship. The disciples see it as a waste. Matthew even describes the disciples' response to this event as indignant, bitter, or angry. Simultaneous to this event, the chief priests and religious leaders have resolved in their heart to kill Jesus because of Jesus' inability to digress to their expectations.

We like to think we are similar to the nameless, worshiping woman in this story. We often celebrate her deep loyalty. In reality, we are more like the disciples and religious leaders than we like to think. We become frustrated when we are asked to wait, when our sin and behavior isn't excused, and when we go through challenges and trials.

Be at peace knowing that Jesus is always one step ahead of us. This woman's act of worship was preparation for Jesus' impending death that the disciples refused to accept and the religious leaders forced to happen. Jesus knows what happens next and moves heaven and earth to make it reality. We don't have to force something to happen. We don't have to worry about the unknown. We don't have to control the moment.

Don't miss what Jesus is doing because of your own agenda.

Prayer Prompt

Spend a moment in prayer as you reflect on the Scripture, asking God to show you ways that you might have gone your own way.

Action Item

Repent for ways that you have forced your own agenda on Jesus and accept what He has already said to you.

Additional Scriptures

Psalm 2



HOLY WEDNESDAY



MAUNDY THURSDAY

Reading Prompt: *Matthew 26:17-55*

Devotional

On Maundy Thursday, Jesus models a new method of love. The word “maundy” is derived from the Latin word *mandatum*, which means “command.” The most central part of Maundy Thursday is Jesus’ new command that He gives His disciples. “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34). Jesus displays His love by taking on the role of a Servant.

Jesus begins by washing His disciples feet. Jesus is their Teacher, and yet, He gets down on His knees to wash their feet. Next, He partakes in communion with the disciples. The Last Supper is the first time we see communion in Scripture, and Jesus foreshadows His own death as they eat and drink. Judas prepares to betray Jesus, and yet, Jesus continues to love Judas as a friend. We see this specifically as Jesus dips the bread that He hands Judas in John 13:26.

Devotional Cont.

Jesus prepares Himself for death as He prays in the Garden of Gethsemane. He asks the Lord to “take this cup” from Him, but nevertheless, “your will be done.” As Jesus prays, He prepares Himself to take on the wrath of God that we so deserved. He is eventually turned over to the Roman soldiers by Judas, and Peter frantically cuts off a slave’s ear. Jesus heals this man as He is carried away to His own death.

Jesus continuously models a new way for His people: to love even unto death. As you reflect on the actions of Jesus, remember the humility of His love. Think about how you love others. Are you willing to love those who seem to deserve your love the least? Does your love reflect the love Jesus has shown you?

Prayer Prompt

Praise God by thanking Him for the life of Jesus. Ask God how you can best embrace the same posture as Jesus and love those around you today.

Action Item

At some point today, find some crackers and juice around your house. Read Matthew 26:17-30, and reflect upon the sacrifice of Jesus. Break the cracker, and take communion. Sing a song of praise to God, and thank Him for the way in which He has loved you. Want a bonus step? Find one way to serve someone around you today.

Additional Scriptures

Philippians 2:1-11

John 13:21-35

Reading Prompt: *Matthew 26:57-27:61*

Devotional

We call it Good Friday but for many it must have seemed like anything but good. The very one the disciples and many others believed to be the Messiah was arrested and now stood trial. A trial where the religious leaders were trying to dishonestly build a case against Jesus for death.

With each hour the day got worse. Jesus was spit on, ridiculed and abandoned by those who were closest to Him. The only one that has ever walked this earth without sin would be brutally beaten and sentenced to death by crucifixion.

On the way to the cross, Jesus would be stripped, mocked and have a crown of thorns placed on his head. The soldiers would gamble for His clothes and nail Him to the cross between two criminals. The Savior of the world put Himself between the guilty.

Finally, Jesus would make the decision to release His spirit. At that moment, the veil in the sanctuary was torn in two, the earth shook, and people rose from the dead. The soldiers would declare - "This man truly was the Son of God!" He was placed in the tomb as those closest to Him would watch this day come to an end.

This day didn't seem good to those watching, but they couldn't see what we see now.

- They couldn't see the good in His choice to conquer sin and death by sacrifice.
- They couldn't see the good in His beating that would pave the way for our healing.
- They couldn't see the good in His death that would pay for the remission of our sins.

GOOD FRIDAY

Prayer Prompt

Ask God what He is trying to show you in this season. Ask him to open your eyes to how He is at work in the midst of it.

Action Item

Write down moments from past seasons where God was at work, even if you didn't see it at the time.

Additional Scriptures

Isaiah 53

Reading Prompt: *Matthew 27:62-66*

Devotional

On Silent Saturday, we enter into the period of silence that those who followed Jesus were in the midst of. Joseph prepared the body of Jesus and placed him in the tomb. Guards were placed there by Pilate at the request of the Pharisees (who did not believe Christ was who He said He was) to ensure no one faked his resurrection, and the stone was rolled in front of the tomb. Matthew 27:61 describes Mary Magdalene and the other Mary sitting opposite the tomb.

When we read this part of the Easter Story, it's not hard to wonder about what was going on for the two Marys, and all who knew, loved, and trusted Jesus as Messiah. What was going through their minds? The promised Messiah, the prophesied Savior, was in a tomb, and those who did not believe Jesus was who He said He was, mocked Him, humiliated Him, and doubted Him. This is the perfect moment for doubt, I can imagine that this would be the perfect moment for doubt to set in, for questioning the plan God had. Yet we see the two Marys waiting, near Jesus, even when they didn't have the resolve of visibly seeing the results of what God was doing. The Disciples and followers of Jesus had a choice that was deeply real in the midst of this. Where would their hope go when waiting?



**SILENT
SATURDAY**

Devotional Cont.

We must be encouraged that the “in between” is not an empty time, but a deeply productive time for the soul; a refining moment where we internalize the promises of God. Psalm 16 reminds us that God is our refuge and that he never abandons us. The truth that David declares is the same one that carried those waiting for Jesus to rise, and is the same promise that we get to embrace as we wait. Are you in a season of waiting? Rely on the promise God has given us through His Son, Jesus. He works through His Perfect Presence in the “in between” and is truly deserving of our trust.

Prayer Prompt

Sit in silence for a chosen amount of time, and allow your mind and heart to become quiet. Ask God to reveal how today’s Scripture can remind you to trust Him in the midst of waiting and uncertainty.

Action Item

Write down areas of your life that you’d describe as being in the “in between” and speak truth over those areas, believing that the same God who raised Christ from the Grave is intimately present in the waiting.



Additional Scriptures

Psalm 16:10



EASTER SUNDAY

Reading Prompt: Matthew 28:1-15

Devotional

The Morning Everything Changed

Easter Sunday is the anchor of our faith. It is the day the “impossible” became our reality. Early that morning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary weren’t looking for a miracle; they were visiting a grave. They expected the finality of a stone and the silence of death. Instead, they found an empty tomb and an invitation to believe.

The Resurrection is the ultimate proof that God’s Word is reliable. The angel reminded the women that Jesus rose “just as he said would happen.” When our circumstances look dark, we can look to the empty tomb and remember that God is the ultimate promise-keeper. The stone was rolled away—not to let Jesus out, but to let us in to see that death had lost its sting and the enemy lost his hold on us.

Devotional *Cont.*

There is a beautiful detail in verse 8: the women left the tomb “frightened but also filled with great joy.” Easter doesn’t promise that all our earthly fears will instantly vanish, but it provides a joy great enough to overcome them. As they went to tell others, Jesus met them.

Today, we celebrate that we serve a living Savior who goes ahead of us. The bribe of the guards and the lies of the world cannot overshadow the truth: the grave is empty, the King is alive, and because He lives, we can face tomorrow with unspeakable joy and unshakable faith.

“The resurrection of Christ changed the midnight of bereavement into a sunrise of reunion; it changed the midnight of disappointment into a sunrise of joy; it changed the midnight of fear to a sunrise of peace.” -Billy Graham

Prayer *Prompt*

Ask God to release the power of the Resurrection in your life today. Ask Him to do this work in your family, church, community and in areas that seem hopeless. Additionally, ask him for courage to walk in joy, even when you feel afraid. Pray knowing that Jesus has already won the victory.

Action *Item*

Identify and list every fear that seems to be lurking in your mind and heart - be as specific as you can. Then, prayerfully cross each one of them out and write “JESUS IS KING” in as big of letters as you can. Take a few minutes to praise Him for defeating every fear. Trust Him for great joy to flood your heart.

Additional *Scriptures*

Psalm 23

Psalm 16:10-11

Psalm 49:5



Additional Resources