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A
Holy Week
Guide

STORIES OF THE PASSION
AND RESURRECTION

 CrossPoint
ALLIANCE CHURCH

OPENING

During this season leading up to Easter, our church is exploring **Stories of the Passion**—moments from Jesus' life in the final days before his Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Some people refer to this seven-day span as Holy Week; others call it Easter Week. This devotional guide is designed to walk you through key moments from this week. You'll examine the way Jesus interacted with people who were among his closest followers and people who were in a place of power and influence.

Focusing on key characters and their reactions to Jesus will offer you insight into your own tendencies as you face Christ, and the invitation to respond that Jesus gives each of us.

Each day, you'll see a specific Scripture passage to read in your Bible or on your Bible app. Then read and consider the brief devotional entry for that day. We've also included two reflection questions for each day, along with a prayer.

Invest a few minutes and walk with Jesus through this pivotal week in his earthly life and ministry. We believe it's an investment that will make this Easter more rewarding and meaningful.

CLOSING: NOW WHAT?

Scripture provides powerful stories from Holy Week—stories of how different people responded to the life and message and truth of Jesus Christ. But the stories don't end there. Each of us is a story being written, too.

This Easter, we invite you to make one of these commitments:

Place your faith and trust in Jesus and follow him

You've never made the decision to follow Jesus, but today you recognize your need for a Savior, your need for someone who offers forgiveness and a lasting hope.

Reaffirm your commitment to Jesus

You've chosen to follow Jesus, but you've been struggling with your faith. You love Jesus, but you need help leading a life that's centered on him and that honors him.

Invite others to follow Jesus, too

You're a devoted follower of Jesus, and you're committed to helping others experience the joy of living for Jesus, too.

PRAY: Jesus, I don't want to go through this life without you. In fact, I can't do it without you. I need you today and every day for the rest of my life. Draw me closer to You. Surround me with people who know you and love you and follow you. Help me point others to you, so they can discover your forgiveness and peace and hope, too. Thank you for the way you showed your love for me at Easter. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY

Read: Luke 24:1-10

CONSIDER - For us, Easter Sunday is a day of celebration, but the first Easter didn't begin that way. The women who first approached his tomb that morning carried funeral spices and ointments, a continuation of the burial rituals that began on Friday.

But when they arrived, they were shocked. The stone covering his tomb was gone. The tomb was empty. And they were suddenly greeted by two men who declared that Jesus was no longer dead but was now alive.

The women tracked down Jesus' disciples and told them the unbelievable news. Not everyone believed them right away, but Peter ran to the tomb to see for himself. And there it was: an empty tomb. Death couldn't hold Jesus down.

REFLECT - How are you sharing the hope of Jesus with people in your life? _____

How is Jesus challenging you to carry the message of Easter beyond this season? _____

PRAY - Jesus, thank you for Easter. I'm thankful that you died for my sins, but I'm also grateful that you came back to life again. Thank you for the hope of Easter and the promise of new life – right here, right now. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY

Read: Luke 19:28-44

CONSIDER - Just days before his Crucifixion, Jesus approached Jerusalem riding on a donkey, and his followers transformed this humble, unassuming arrival into a moment of celebration. People covered the road with garments, and the Gospels of *Mark* and *Matthew* each say that some in the crowd also placed "leafy branches"—all as a sign of honor and respect.

God's creation is designed to worship, and that's what the people did: They praised Jesus because of the miracles he'd performed, the truth he'd shared, and the lives he'd changed.

And as Jesus got closer to Jerusalem, he wept over the city. he knew what would happen in the coming days (as well as the destruction Jerusalem would face a few decades down the road). Throughout his ministry, Jesus had demonstrated love and compassion and mercy to the people he encountered—and it remained true in the days leading up to his Crucifixion and Resurrection.

REFLECT - Jesus wept for Jerusalem—how is God breaking your heart for the LC Valley? _____

How are you praying for your community today? How might Jesus want you to pray for it? _____

PRAY - Jesus, give me a heart of love and compassion for this world. Help me see people as you see them: my neighbors, co-workers, classmates, family members and even random strangers. Help me make a difference for you in my community. Amen.

MONDAY

Read: Luke 22:47-53

CONSIDER - For more than three years, Judas was one of Jesus' closest followers. He witnessed miracles. He heard powerful teaching. He saw changed lives.

And then Judas betrayed him. But we don't fully understand why he did it, a truth that forces us to consider how and if we might betray Jesus, too.

When you get close to Jesus, you'll either give yourself fully to him or you'll give up on him. But he never gives up on you. No matter what you've done or where you've been or how you've lived, Jesus offers another chance. How your life concludes is infinitely more important than how your life begins, a truth Judas didn't seem to recognize. But it's a truth that offers us hope today.

REFLECT - What are some ways we might betray Jesus in our 21st-century lives? _____

How have you experienced Jesus' desire to give you a "second chance" in life? _____

PRAY - Jesus, I want my life to reflect you more and more each day, and I want my life to point others to you. When I stumble, remind me of your grace and mercy, and help me to reach out to you for another chance. Amen.

SATURDAY

Read: Psalm 39:4-7

CONSIDER - Today we step back from the Gospel of *Luke* to consider a passage from the Old Testament that captures the heart of this day near the end of Holy Week. The Bible doesn't tell us what Jesus' followers did or how they felt on the day after his Crucifixion, but they surely were consumed by confusion, angst, and heartbreak.

Their Messiah had been crucified. They'd followed him passionately, but now he was gone. They likely felt alone, afraid, and even abandoned.

Most of us struggle to wait patiently when we're enduring a difficult season or facing a confusing situation. In those moments, we can choose to place our hope in Jesus and join the psalmist in declaring, "And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you."

REFLECT - When do you find it most difficult to place your hope in Jesus? How can you find hope in the waiting? _____

How is your life different when you choose to trust Jesus, even in the middle of the most painful, confusing, frustrating situations?

PRAY - Jesus, I choose to place my hope and trust in you. Even when I'm filled with doubt and fear, I make that choice. Give me your peace, your strength, your comfort, and remind me of all the times you have remained faithful to me. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY

Read: Luke 23:26-56

CONSIDER - Today is Good Friday, the day Jesus walked to the site of his Crucifixion, the day he was brutally beaten and left on a cross to suffer and die.

So it's only natural to ask: What's so *good* about Good Friday?

The pain and suffering were not good. The torture and humiliation were not good. But the love and forgiveness and mercy that Jesus displayed that day—oh, these were good. Jesus paid the price for our sins, offered the gift of forgiveness, and made it possible for us to experience abundant life here on Earth and eternal life with God. Here we witness the Kingdom of God breaking through to Earth. Redemption is near.

It may not be immediately clear, but God's goodness was on full display on Good Friday.

REFLECT - When have you seen God take something bad in your life and turn it into something good? How has your life been changed by the Gospel, the *good news* coming from Good Friday?

As we remember Jesus' sacrifice today, what's one simple thing you can do to remain aware of your gratitude for what he did on Good Friday?

PRAY - Jesus, thank you for your willingness to suffer and die on the cross. Thank you for paying the price for my sins so I can spend eternity with you. I don't deserve your unending love yet you offer it to me anyway—thanks. Amen.

TUESDAY

Read: Luke 22:31-34, 54-62

CONSIDER - Peter was probably the boldest of Jesus' closest followers. He was so bold that he declared in *Luke 22:33* that he'd go with Jesus "both to prison and to death." But when the pressure rose, Peter caved.

We don't always face dangerous, life-on-the-line moments like Peter experienced that night—and like many followers of Jesus face in our world today. We enjoy immeasurable freedom to worship and declare our faith here in the West.

Yet too often we're guilty of denial-by-silence. Not speaking out against hatred and racism. Not speaking up for the outcast and the orphan. Not verbally declaring our devotion to Jesus. Not challenging our culture to follow the ways of Jesus.

This Easter, choose to stay silent no more.

REFLECT - Think of a recent time when you were guilty of denial-by-silence. Why did you stay silent? How have you failed to stand with Jesus?

When are you most tempted to deny that you're a follower of Jesus? What situations or people make it tough for you to clearly verbalize your faith?

PRAY - Jesus, I face times when it's easy to stay silent about my faith in you. But I don't want to live that kind of life. I want to declare that I'm one of your followers. Give me the courage and boldness to live for you and speak for you and stand up for you. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

Read: Luke 22:63-71

CONSIDER - Jesus had always faced opposition from religious leaders during his earthly ministry, but on this night it reached its culmination. He was forced to stand before religious leaders who opposed him because he threatened their comfort, their view of God—and their system.

They saw him as a blasphemer and failed to see him as the Son of God. These leaders held his fate in their hands, but it was all a show, a sham. They'd already made their decision.

Do you feel threatened by Jesus? As you draw closer to him, is he challenging your way of life or your priorities or the way you see the world? Or maybe he's challenging one or two key areas you're clinging to tightly because they're most valuable to you. You want to follow Jesus, but not *completely* and not *totally*.

The rewards of fully surrendering to Jesus far outweigh the rewards of comfort, even if it is hard to see in the moment.

REFLECT - Where is Jesus challenging you right now? What is he asking you to surrender to him? _____

How does a humble attitude help you draw closer to Jesus and become the person he's created you to be? _____

PRAY - Jesus, I want to be fully devoted to you. I know that following you can make me feel uncomfortable at times, but it's because you're shaping and changing and transforming me. Help me trust you and your plan for my life. Amen.

THURSDAY

Read: Luke 23:1-25

CONSIDER - Perhaps the most pivotal question in the Bible is found in *Luke 9:20*, where Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter immediately declared that Jesus was the Messiah—the Promised One sent by God.

In *Luke 23*, we see Pilate wrestling with this same question—and wrestling with Jesus' innocence. Pilate's indecisiveness about Jesus still produced a decisive verdict. Ultimately, Pilate accepted the answer provided by the religious leaders, that Jesus was a threat. And Pilate submitted to the crowd's demand that Jesus be crucified.

Each of us must also answer the question of who Jesus is, and our answer shapes every part of life: our choices, our actions, our purchases, our relationships. If you truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Promised One, the Savior—if you accept as true that he's everything he claims to be, then your life will reflect that truth.

REFLECT - How do you choose to answer the question of who Jesus is? How does your life reveal that answer to the people around you? _____

How do you see Jesus differently than you did a year ago, or five years ago, or even earlier than that? _____

PRAY - Jesus, I choose to believe that you are who you say you are. You're more than a great teacher or a wise religious leader from the past. You are the Son of God, and I want my life to reflect my faith in you. Amen.