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# Holy Week

The Path of the Cross  
and Resurrection

**Are you exhausted**

**Do you sense that the world isn't as God created it to be?**

**Is it hard for you to find your sense of purpose and belonging after so much has changed?**

**If you're tired from transitions, big or small, or if you're in need of refreshment, this is an invitation to you.**



“Then Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.’”  
(Matthew 11:28-29, NLT)

In anticipation of Easter Sunday, we invite you to experience Jesus and to receive the rest He promises through His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection.

Follow along as we journey together through Holy Week, reflecting on Jesus' path to the cross and what it means for you today. Starting with Palm Sunday and Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, this eight-day devotional series includes passages of Scripture taking us through Jesus' final days of ministry on earth.

You'll also have the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of Jesus and Christianity through a section called “Faith Asked Question.”

We pray this eight-day journey will refresh you with the grace and rest offered by Jesus' life and completed work on the cross.



# The Unexpected Savior King

## Day 1

TODAY'S READING:

### **John 12:12-28, NLT**

The next day, the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city. A large crowd of Passover visitors took palm branches and went down the road to meet him. They shouted,

“Praise God!

Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hail to the King of Israel!”

Jesus found a young donkey and rode on it, fulfilling the prophecy that said:

“Don't be afraid, people of Jerusalem.

Look, your King is coming, riding on a donkey's colt.”

His disciples didn't understand at the time that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. But after Jesus entered into his glory, they remembered what had happened and realized that these things had been written about him.

Many in the crowd had seen Jesus call Lazarus from the tomb, raising him from the dead, and they were telling others about it. That was the reason so many went out to meet him—because they had heard about this miraculous sign. Then the Pharisees said to each other, “There’s nothing we can do. Look, everyone has gone after him!”

### **Jesus Predicts His Death**

Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration paid a visit to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee. They said, “Sir, we want to meet Jesus.” Philip told Andrew about it, and they went together to ask Jesus.

Jesus replied, “Now the time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory. I tell you the truth,

unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives. Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity. Anyone who wants to serve me must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me.

“Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But this is the very reason I came! Father, bring glory to your name.”

Then a voice spoke from heaven, saying, “I have already brought glory to my name, and I will do so again.”

It doesn’t take much imagination to picture a king riding into battle, galloping in on a white horse, sword ready, armor gleaming. Yet Christ’s triumphal entry described in John 12 shows us a true king doesn’t need fancy props.

On what we now call Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem riding a humble donkey. Yet He received a royal welcome. Cloaks and palm branches rolled out on the road before Him like a red carpet. A crowd gathered, waving branches and cheering.

# Reflect and Respond

To whom or what are you looking for deliverance? What is one way you need Jesus, the true king, to deliver you today? Is there a sin you can't seem to escape? Envy, anger, control or addiction\*?

Make no mistake: If you've invited Jesus into your life, you are His. He is your King and Savior. Ask Him to free you of any sin holding you back today. Then choose to follow Him moment by moment, knowing that He will always lead you to freedom.

## Faith Asked

## Question:



**Is Jesus God or just a good man?** Explore more about Jesus here.



**What is the gospel?** Learn more here.

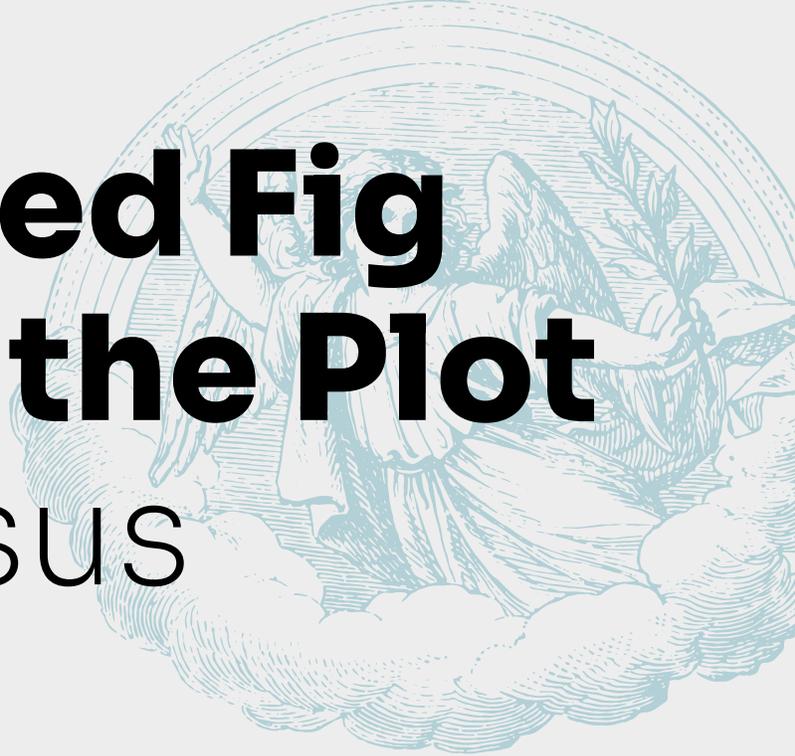
*\* This devotional addresses mental health issues that affect people from all walks of life. While addressing parts of these issues within the context of Christian community is important, there are times when further professional help may be required. It is OK to ask for help! If you are in this situation, please seek out a mental health professional.*



*A tool to find a professional in your area, along with other resources, can be found at <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/life-and-relationships/emotions/mental-health-resources.html>.*

*Lisa Lakey is the Director of Publications for FamilyLife. In the little free time she finds between all things parenting and ministry, you can probably find her curled up with a book, hiking a trail, or grabbing lunch with friends. Lisa lives in central Arkansas, with her two kids, Ella and Max.*

# A Withered Fig Tree and the Plot to Kill Jesus



## Day 2

TODAY'S READING:

### **Mark 11:12–19, NLT**

The next morning as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. He noticed a fig tree in full leaf a little way off, so he went over to see if he could find any figs. But there were only leaves because it was too early in the season for fruit. Then Jesus said to the tree, "May no one ever eat your fruit again!" And the disciples heard him say it.

When they arrived back in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the people buying and selling animals for sacrifices.

He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves, and he stopped everyone from using the Temple as a marketplace. He said to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves."

When the leading priests and teachers of religious law heard what Jesus had done, they began planning how to kill him. But they were afraid of him because the people were so amazed at his teaching. That evening Jesus and the disciples left the city.

In the days following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus continued to teach in the temple, with the religious leaders nearby. As Jesus noticed the barren fig tree and turned over tables in the temple, He compared the fruitlessness of the fig tree with the danger of practicing empty religion. Standing in a place where others could overhear Him, Jesus warned the disciples to beware of the religious leaders.

Jesus taught: "Beware of these teachers of religious law! For they like to parade around in flowing robes and receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces. And how they love the seats of honor in the synagogues and the head table at banquets. Yet they shamelessly cheat widows out of their property and then pretend to be pious by making long prayers in public. Because of this, they will be more severely punished" **(Mark 12:38-40, NLT)**.

They dressed themselves up so they could look important. They loved being greeted in the marketplace because it made them feel important. They helped themselves to the best seats in the synagogue and at the feasts so everyone could see just how important they were.

They prayed long prayers so others would know how religious they were, and yet they took advantage of widows. In their quest to appear perfect, were they true to the faith they professed?

Jesus didn't mince words. In passages like Luke 11:37-54, He called them hypocrites. Instead of loving and serving others, they made sure others served them. Jesus promised they would be punished.

Part of being authentic is self-awareness. We are more like the religious leaders than we would like to admit. We have that same tendency to try to appear holy by doing religious things, yet not allowing Jesus to change us to be like Him. And though very few of us would identify as hypocrites, we want others to think more highly of us. Sometimes we forget to care enough about what God thinks of us.

As you prepare for Easter, remember that Jesus loves you as you are. He's not asking you to clean up your act before coming to Him. You can bring your real self to Him. He knows all about your thoughts and actions.

But Jesus also loves us so much that He doesn't leave us in our sin and

brokenness. His love for you includes the parts of you that hurt and the parts that aren't yet what you wish they were. He offers forgiveness and hope to all those who come to him in their sin — just as they are. Allow His grace to lay the firm foundation for your life. And as you follow Him, He promises to transform you to be like Him — giving you the ability to produce real fruit by radiating love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (**Galatians 5:22**).

## Reflect and Respond

As you prepare for Easter, how can you turn your eyes toward Jesus? Ask God to help you receive what He thinks about you. Sit in His love for you today.

**Faith Asked**

Question:



**What is God's grace?**

Explore more about what His grace is and why we all desperately need it.

*Anne Marie Winz has followed Christ for 50 years. She's married to Mark, has two adult children and enjoys teaching, drinking coffee and birding. She's also a staff member with Cru.*

# The Old Testament

## Passover and Today



### Day 3

TODAY'S READING:

### **Luke 22:1-20, NLT**

The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is also called Passover, was approaching. The leading priests and teachers of religious law were plotting how to kill Jesus, but they were afraid of the people's reaction.

Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples, and he went to the leading priests and captains of the Temple guard to discuss the best way to betray Jesus to them.

They were delighted, and they promised to give him money. So he agreed and began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus so they could arrest him when the crowds weren't around.

Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread arrived, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John ahead and said, "Go and prepare the Passover meal, so we can eat it together."

"Where do you want us to prepare it?" they asked him.

He replied, "As soon as you enter Jerusalem, a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you. Follow him. At the house he enters, say to the owner, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?' He will take you upstairs to a large room that is already set up. That is where you should prepare our meal." They went off to the city and found everything just as Jesus had said, and they prepared the Passover meal there.

When the time came, Jesus and the apostles sat down together at the table. Jesus said, "I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins. For I tell you now that I won't eat this meal again until its

meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God."

Then he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. For I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come."

He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After supper he took another cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you."

At the first Passover, God instructed the Israelites, who were still captive in Egypt, to sacrifice a special lamb and apply its blood to the doorframes of their homes. God explains why in Exodus 12:12-13, "On that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and strike down every firstborn son and firstborn male animal in the land of Egypt. I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the LORD! But the blood on your doorposts will serve as a sign, marking the houses where you are staying. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt." (NLT)

During the first Passover, Israelites needed to believe God's declaration and to apply the blood to their doorframes. Their belief led to an obedience of

sacrificing an animal and applying the blood. The plague of death passed over those who believed and acted in faith.

In verse 20 of today's Luke passage, we see Jesus describe Himself as the true Passover sacrifice. In this new covenant through Jesus, we also must believe — believe God's declaration that the blood of Jesus covers all of our sins. And, it is in trusting in Jesus that we turn from our sins in repentance and, in faith, apply His blood to our lives. Spiritual death and judgment pass over those who place their trust in Jesus.

Just as it was for the Israelites, our participation is a critical act of obedience, surrender and trust.

Jesus taught that a life of repentance is necessary if you want to experience the abundant life He promises, not only in eternity but here on earth as well. A life of repentance begins when you first confess your need for Jesus as your Lord and Savior, but it continues on as an important part of your relationship with Him.

When you trust Him for your salvation, Jesus is with you. His Word shows you what it looks like to connect to Him, and His Spirit guides and convicts you in that process. When you mess up, He doesn't condemn you or get angry. Instead, He lovingly calls you to turn away from your sin and move toward Him. In doing this, you apply Jesus' sacrifice to your sin, and receive the grace and forgiveness offered instead of judgment.

Sometimes, it may feel difficult or even painful to repent. It often requires surrendering things that seem satisfying in the moment. Though it may feel like a loss to give things up, surrendering in obedience to God's Word frees you from guilt and shame. Likewise, it brings joy as you experience the reality that obedience pleases God and is in your best interest.

Your motivation to repent is bound up in your relationship with Jesus. Remember that you don't repent in order to get God to love you more. You repent because He already loves you completely. The sooner you choose to repent, the sooner Jesus will free you from guilt and shame. Then you can enjoy His loving forgiveness, which brings peace and joy.

When you abide in Christ — when He is where you go for comfort — you will find yourself wanting to repent more often. You'll long for deeper fellowship with Him, which is your ultimate source of peace, joy and purpose.



# Reflect and Respond

In what area of your life is Christ urging you to turn away from sin and move toward Him so that you can live an abundant life in fellowship with Him?

*Heavenly Father, thank You for nudging me to repent so that I can turn from my sin and be forgiven. Thank You for reminding me that my greatest peace and joy come from abiding in You, not from going my own way. Today, I repent of \_\_\_\_\_. Thank You for forgiving me when I have failed and fallen. Take my life and use it for Your glory. Amen.*

## Faith Asked

### Question:



**What is repentance, and how do I do it?** Explore more about why repentance is foundational in your relationship with Jesus.



**What is the traditional Passover meal?** Learn more about Passover and the connection between the Old and New Testaments.

*Holly Melton joined Cru® as a staff member in 1999 and is a speaker, writer and ministry coach. She is passionate about training the body of Christ in evangelism and discipleship.*

# A Symbolic Act of Love Toward Friends and Enemies



## Day 4

### TODAY'S READING:

## **John 13:1-14:7, NLT**

Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end.

It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come

from God and would return to God. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will."

“No,” Peter protested, “you will never ever wash my feet!”

Jesus replied, “Unless I wash you, you won’t belong to me.”

Simon Peter exclaimed, “Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!”

Jesus replied, “A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you.” For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, “Do you understand what I was doing? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that’s what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

### **Jesus Predicts His Betrayal**

“I am not saying these things to all of you; I know the ones I have chosen. But this fulfills the

Scripture that says, ‘The one who eats my food has turned against me.’ I tell you this beforehand, so that when it happens you will believe that I am the Messiah. I tell you the truth, anyone who welcomes my messenger is welcoming me, and anyone who welcomes me is welcoming the Father who sent me.”

Now Jesus was deeply troubled, and he exclaimed, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me!”

The disciples looked at each other, wondering whom he could mean. The disciple Jesus loved was sitting next to Jesus at the table. Simon Peter motioned to him to ask, “Who’s he talking about?” So that disciple leaned over to Jesus and asked, “Lord, who is it?”

Jesus responded, “It is the one to whom I give the bread I dip in the bowl.” And when he had dipped it, he gave it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. When Judas had eaten the bread, Satan entered into him. Then Jesus told him, “Hurry and do what you’re going to do.” None of the others at the table knew what Jesus meant. Since Judas was their treasurer, some thought Jesus was telling him to go and pay for the food or to give some money to the poor. So Judas left at once, going out into the night.

## **Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial**

As soon as Judas left the room, Jesus said, "The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory, and God will be glorified because of him. And since God receives glory because of the Son, he will give his own glory to the Son, and he will do so at once. Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can't come where I am going. So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

Simon Peter asked, "Lord, where are you going?"

And Jesus replied, "You can't go with me now, but you will follow me later."

"But why can't I come now, Lord?" he asked. "I'm ready to die for you."

Jesus answered, "Die for me? I tell you the truth, Peter—before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.

## **Jesus, the Way to the Father**

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me.

There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going." "No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!"



***“Lied to your parents.*** My cheeks burned pink.

***Lied to your friends.***

***Gossiped.***

***Cheated in school.***

***Ditched class.***

***Intentionally hurt someone else.***

***Indulged in sexual sin.”*** I was one of the hundred 15-year-olds charged to confess my sins as part of a religious rite of passage. During this exercise, my confessor listed sins one by one while, with a nod or shake of the head, I either confirmed or denied my guilt. Though it was meant to make confession easier on our young souls, the drill made my heart beat fast and my stomach tighten as the list grew longer. The feelings of condemnation and judgment I experienced felt insurmountable.

Growing up, I could relate to King David, who said, “I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me” (Psalm 51:3, NIV). I had a nagging sense of falling short. Sometimes, I was not sure why things I did were wrong, like when I messed up a ritual at my church. But sometimes, I was keenly aware of my wrongdoing, like when I spoke spitefully to my brother, though I loved him dearly.

As I carried those moments with me, I wondered how to be better. I felt little relief after confession or ritual prayers meant to ease my guilt. Those moments grew into obsessions with my inadequacy and with becoming clean. And the obsessions grew into thoughts I couldn’t escape.

I learned later that this was due, in part, to an anxiety disorder\* that went undetected for years. But even that revelation could not refute the truth that I had chosen to do sinful things which I could not undo.

Years later, I sat across from a friend who’d been determined to help me understand the love of God.

I knew the story she shared about Jesus and the cross, but this time I snapped to attention. I stopped her and said, “Okay. I get it. Here’s what I don’t get. What do I have to do, and what do I have to avoid, to make sure God never stops loving me, to make sure I’m okay?”

She looked me in the eye, smiled, and said, “You never did anything to make

God start loving you. You'll never do anything to make Him stop."

"Wait ... what? Just like that?" I immediately said.

My dear friend nodded, and I sat stunned, relieved in a way I'd never been before. Tears stung my eyes as I understood. That was why Jesus died: to show me that, in Him, my guilt can be forgiven once and for all, and that I really do belong to Him forever. In Jesus, I'm also free from condemnation and judgment.

As a symbolic act of love and compassion, Jesus washes the feet of His disciples — the disciples who He knew would deny, abandon and betray Him. The disciples could not save themselves, but Jesus could. He does the same for us today.

"But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners," writes the apostle Paul (Romans 5:8, NLT).

A weight lifted for me that day, and we both began to laugh. I was free. I could finally breathe. Later, I learned that I could walk in love rather than worry. Nothing can change what is true about me: I am forgiven and free, and I don't have to carry the weight of those moments anymore.

## Reflect and Respond

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Just as Jesus washed the disciples' feet, God promises that when we "confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all wickedness"(1 John 1:9, NLT). What moments or patterns of sin weigh you down? Write one or two down and confess them directly to God. Give them to Him, remembering that Christ paid for these sins and more when He died on the cross.

## REMEMBER THESE WORDS FROM PSALM 103.

“The Lord is compassionate and merciful,  
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.  
He will not constantly accuse us,  
nor remain angry forever.  
He does not punish us for all our sins;  
he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.  
For his unfailing love toward those who fear him  
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.  
He has removed our sins as far from us  
as the east is from the west” (Psalm 103:8-12, NLT).

## Faith Asked

### Question:



### What does it mean to have your identity in Christ?

Explore more about how God sees you.

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*Rebecca Kelsall is a writer for Cru® in Orlando, Florida. Her family consists of herself (a native New Mexican), her husband (a born-and-raised New Englander), their dachshund-beagle, Belle, and their baby boy. Some of her greatest passions include Jesus, culture, family and stories.*

# Betrayed, Arrested, Denied — Jesus' Response



## Day 5

TODAY'S READING:

### **Luke 22:31-65, NLT**

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers."

Peter said, "Lord, I am ready to go to prison with you, and even to die with you."

But Jesus said, "Peter, let me tell

you something. Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me."

Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you out to preach the Good News and you did not have money, a traveler's bag, or an extra pair of sandals, did you need anything?"

"No," they replied.

"But now," he said, "take your money and a traveler's bag. And if you don't have a sword, sell your

cloak and buy one! For the time has come for this prophecy about me to be fulfilled: 'He was counted among the rebels.' Yes, everything written about me by the prophets will come true."

"Look, Lord," they replied,  
"we have two swords among us."

"That's enough," he said.

### **Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives**

Then, accompanied by the disciples, Jesus left the upstairs room and went as usual to the Mount of Olives. There he told them, "Pray that you will not give in to temptation."

He walked away, about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.

At last he stood up again and returned to the disciples, only to find them asleep, exhausted from grief. "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation."

### **Jesus Is Betrayed and Arrested**

But even as Jesus said this, a crowd approached, led by Judas, one of the twelve disciples. Judas walked over to Jesus to greet him with a kiss. But Jesus said, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

When the other disciples saw what was about to happen, they exclaimed, "Lord, should we fight? We brought the swords!" And one of them struck at the high priest's slave, slashing off his right ear.

But Jesus said, "No more of this." And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

Then Jesus spoke to the leading priests, the captains of the Temple guard, and the elders who had come for him. "Am I some dangerous revolutionary," he asked, "that you come with swords and clubs to arrest me? Why didn't you arrest me in the Temple? I was there every day. But this is your moment, the time when the power of darkness reigns."

### **Peter Denies Jesus**

So they arrested him and led him to the high priest's home. And Peter followed at a distance. The guards lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat around it, and Peter joined them there. A

servant girl noticed him in the firelight and began staring at him. Finally she said, "This man was one of Jesus' followers!"

But Peter denied it. "Woman," he said, "I don't even know him!"

After a while someone else looked at him and said, "You must be one of them!"

"No, man, I'm not!" Peter retorted.

About an hour later someone else insisted, "This must be one of them, because he is a Galilean, too."

But Peter said, "Man, I don't know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

At that moment the Lord turned

and looked at Peter. Suddenly, the Lord's words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me." And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly.

The guards in charge of Jesus began mocking and beating him. They blindfolded him and said, "Prophecy to us! Who hit you that time?" And they hurled all sorts of terrible insults at him.



I woke with dried tears around my eyes like sleep dust. My ankle throbbed beneath the covers, reminding me of yesterday's news: my injury was serious. Despair set in. I thought I was getting better, but now recovery felt entirely out of sight. Soon, shame set in. I wasn't handling the waiting well; my circumstances were dictating my life. I told myself that I should trust Jesus and ask Him for peace, knowing that He is in control and has my best intentions in mind. But like my recovery, He felt out of reach. I wonder how

Peter felt when he looked Jesus in the eyes after denying Him — not once but three times, and just hours after Jesus had foretold it.

Peter had propped himself up as Jesus' "ride-or-die" companion. He swore his loyalty to Jesus, boldly proclaiming he was ready to follow Him anywhere, into anything, including intense suffering.

In verses 61-62, Jesus helps Peter see the bitter truth about himself: Peter would follow, but instead of remaining with Jesus in His darkest hours, Peter would abandon Him first.

Peter remembered this prophecy in the moment, but did Peter recall the grace-filled encouragement that came before it? Jesus had prefaced His warning with reassurance in verse 32. In the same conversation, Jesus revealed that Peter would fail miserably and that he would recover. Jesus' prayers would preserve Peter's faith, and Peter's recovery would come with the godly purpose of strengthening his brothers.

Likewise, when you mess up, Jesus isn't surprised or distant. He saw your failure coming. Jesus not only endured abandonment and denial from some of His closest followers, but faced both emotional and physical torment while bearing the weight of God's justice. Jesus intervened for you on the cross. And Hebrews 7:25 states that, just like He did for Peter, Jesus forever lives to intercede for you and restore your relationship with Him. So that, like Peter, you will reach the other side of failure — for His glory and your good.



# Reflect and Respond

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What is one failure or disappointment in your life for which you struggle to imagine recovery or restoration?

Reflect on how Jesus had the foresight to see your struggle coming and also has the foresight and power to provide a way of recovery. Experience God's grace in revealing to you the truth about yourself and your circumstances.

*Jesus, thank You for Your patient endurance. Thank You that you made the way for me to have a restored relationship with you. I surrender to You. Give me faith to trust that You will give me the grace I need now. Help me to trust that You will carry me through and give me purpose on the other side of this disappointment and failure. Amen.*

**Faith Asked**

Question:



**What happens when I feel like I've failed God?**

Explore more about God's forgiveness when we inevitably fail Him.

*Chealsia Smedley served with the City ministry of Cru® as a podcast host and writer for Created For. She earned a degree in magazine journalism from Ohio University and tells stories that unite her passions for truth and connection.*

# The Darkness and Victory of Good Friday



## Day 6

TODAY'S READING:

### **Mark 15, NLT**

Very early in the morning the leading priests, the elders, and the teachers of religious law—the entire high council—met to discuss their next step. They bound Jesus, led him away, and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

Jesus replied, “You have said it.” Then the leading priests kept accusing him of many crimes, and Pilate asked him, “Aren’t you going to answer them? What

about all these charges they are bringing against you?” But Jesus said nothing, much to Pilate’s surprise.

Now it was the governor’s custom each year during the Passover celebration to release one prisoner—anyone the people requested. One of the prisoners at that time was Barabbas, a revolutionary who had committed murder in an uprising.

The crowd went to Pilate and asked him to release a prisoner as usual.

“Would you like me to release to

you this ‘King of the Jews?’” Pilate asked. (For he realized by now that the leading priests had arrested Jesus out of envy.) But at this point the leading priests stirred up the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. Pilate asked them, “Then what should I do with this man you call the king of the Jews?”

They shouted back, “Crucify him!”

“Why?” Pilate demanded. “What crime has he committed?”

But the mob roared even louder, “Crucify him!”

So to pacify the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.

### **The Soldiers Mock Jesus**

The soldiers took Jesus into the courtyard of the governor’s headquarters (called the Praetorium) and called out the entire regiment. They dressed him in a purple robe, and they wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head. Then they saluted him and taunted, “Hail! King of the Jews!” And they struck him on the head with a reed stick, spit on him, and dropped to their

knees in mock worship.

When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.

### **The Crucifixion**

A passerby named Simon, who was from Cyrene, was coming in from the countryside just then, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus’ cross. (Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus.) And they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha (which means “Place of the Skull”). They offered him wine drugged with myrrh, but he refused it.

Then the soldiers nailed him to the cross. They divided his clothes and threw dice to decide who would get each piece. It was nine o’clock in the morning when they crucified him. A sign announced the charge against him. It read, “The King of the Jews.” Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. “Ha! Look at you now!” they yelled at him. “You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well

then, save yourself and come down from the cross!"

The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself! Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!" Even the men who were crucified with Jesus ridiculed him.

### **The Death of Jesus**

At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. "Wait!" he said. "Let's see whether Elijah comes to take him down!"

Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had

died, he exclaimed, "This man truly was the Son of God!"

Some women were there, watching from a distance, including Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James the younger and of Joseph), and Salome. They had been followers of Jesus and had cared for him while he was in Galilee. Many other women who had come with him to Jerusalem were also there.

### **The Burial of Jesus**

This all happened on Friday, the day of preparation, the day before the Sabbath. As evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea took a risk and went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. (Joseph was an honored member of the high council, and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come.) Pilate couldn't believe that Jesus was already dead, so he called for the Roman officer and asked if he had died yet. The officer confirmed that Jesus was dead, so Pilate told Joseph he could have the body. Joseph bought a long sheet of linen cloth. Then he took Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapped it in the cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone in front of the entrance. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where Jesus' body was laid.

Reading the phrase “and the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two” in today’s context doesn’t hold as much weight as it did in Jesus’ time. What comes to mind when you picture a curtain? Possibly a window? So, why would a curtain have anything to do with Jesus dying on the cross?

In fact, this moment was monumental, and there is more to it than you may be able to see from your twenty-first-century perspective.

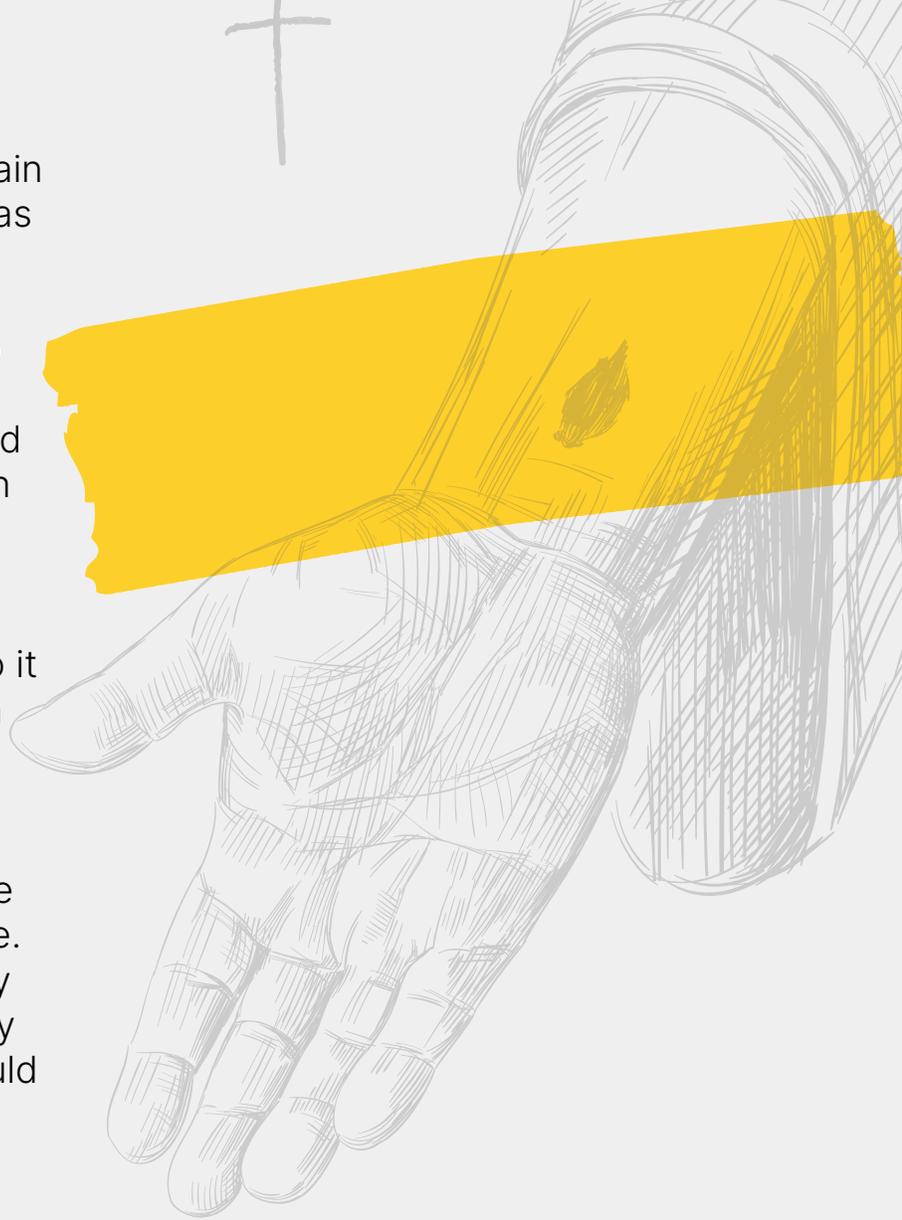
The temple was where God chose to make His home with His people. Within the temple, behind a heavy curtain (called a veil) was the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest could enter this sacred space, and only after following elaborate instructions for purification.

The ripping of the curtain at Jesus’ death represents something profound. Jesus offered the final sacrifice for purification — Himself.

Before giving up His spirit, Jesus said, “It is finished” (**John 19:30, NLT**). The moment that looked like ultimate defeat, Jesus’ death, was actually ultimate victory because of what His death (and resurrection) accomplished.

The violent tearing of the curtain represents both Jesus’ gruesome death and sacrifice for our sin, as well as the removal of the barrier between people and God.

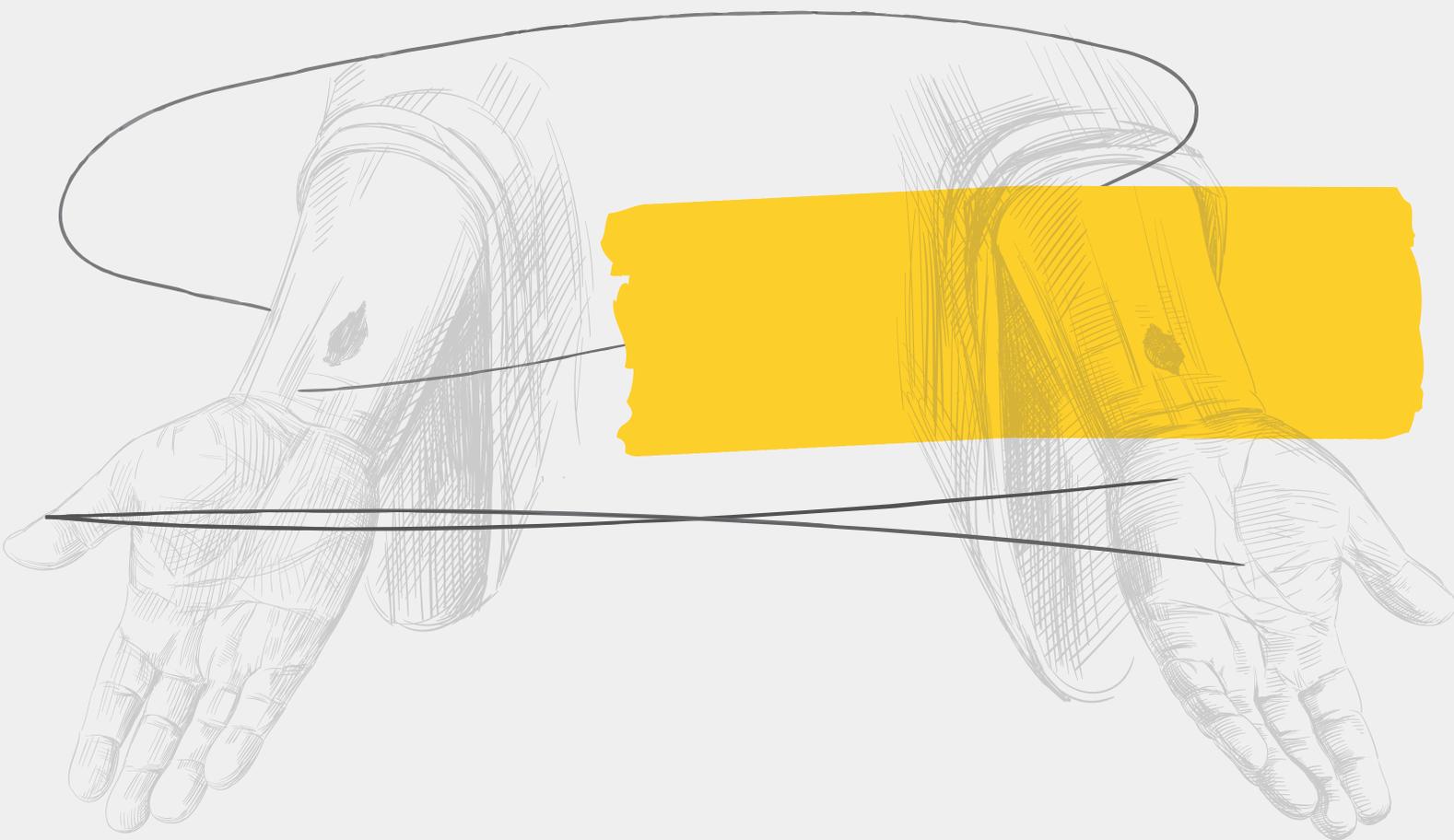
Now that the curtain was left ripped and open, sinful people could enter into God’s presence. With sin taken out of the equation through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, all people could finally come freely into fellowship with God (**see Hebrews 10:19-22**).



The moment you confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you step into an eternal relationship with Him.

No longer does the temple hold the presence of God, but His presence lives in you.

The author of Hebrews shows what is now possible for those who put their faith in Jesus. "So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most" (**Hebrews 4:16, NLT**).



# Reflect and Respond

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What is one way your life is different because Christ tore the temple veil in two?

*Jesus, I'm amazed by Your wondrous mercy and love. Clear my mind and help me to understand the sacrifice You made. Thank You for giving Your life in my place and for opening the way for me to have a restored relationship with You forever. Amen.*

**Faith Asked**

Question:



**Why did Jesus have to die?**

Explore more answers about the crucifixion.



**If you've never experienced the love and grace of God,** take time to read more about knowing God personally.

*Brandie Alvarez was born and raised in California. She formerly worked with the ministry of Destino®, a Christ-centered movement aimed to empower and raise up a generation of Hispanic and Latino students. She enjoys traveling, finding new coffee shops and watching documentaries.*

# You're Not Alone in the Dark



## Day 7

TODAY'S READING:

### **Isaiah 53, NLT**

Who has believed our message?  
To whom has the Lord revealed  
his powerful arm?

My servant grew up in the Lord's  
presence like a tender green  
shoot, like a root in dry ground.

There was nothing beautiful  
or majestic about his appearance,  
nothing to attract us to him.

He was despised and rejected—  
a man of sorrows, acquainted with

deepest grief.

We turned our backs on him and  
looked the other way. He was  
despised, and we did not care.

Yet it was our weaknesses he  
carried; it was our sorrows that  
weighed him down.

And we thought his troubles were  
a punishment from God, a  
punishment for his own sins!

But he was pierced for our  
rebellion, crushed for our sins.

He was beaten so we could be  
whole.

He was whipped so we could be healed.

All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own.

Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word.

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

Unjustly condemned, he was led away.

No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream.

But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people.

He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.

But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants.

He will enjoy a long life, and the

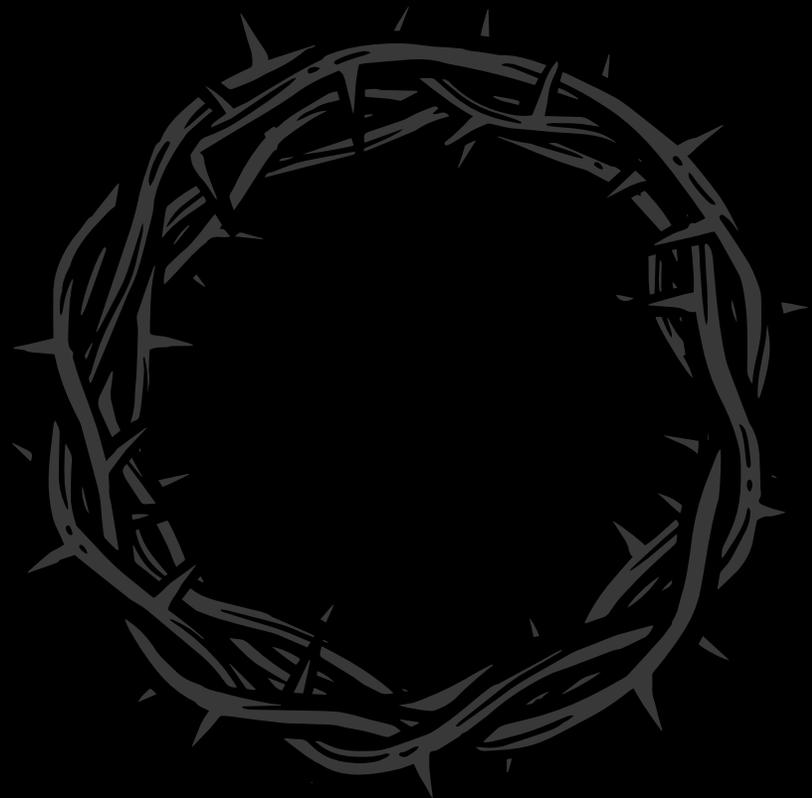
Lord's good plan will prosper in his hands.

When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied.

And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death.

He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.



The first Holy Saturday experience for Jesus' followers was colored in dark tones and painted with despair. After witnessing Jesus' death on the cross and burial in stone, His followers were left without their teacher, their healer or their hope.

They were without the One who spoke words of eternal life. Without the One who turned their lives right-side up. Without the One they intended to follow the rest of their lives.

A deafening "without" echoed on that mournful Saturday.

Before Jesus was crucified, He had warned His disciples this would happen.

"I said in a little while you won't see me, but a little while after that you will see me again. I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy. It will be like a woman suffering the pains of labor. When her child is born, her anguish gives way to joy because she has brought a new baby into the world. So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy. ... But the time is coming — indeed it's here now — when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world" (John 16:19-23; 32-33, NLT).

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah foretold what the suffering servant, Jesus, would experience. Jesus knew His followers would flee and He'd be left alone. Jesus also knew that as He bore the wrath of God on our behalf, His death would separate Him from the Father. Jesus would experience an incomprehensible darkness and the deafening silence of God.

If you've lived long enough, you've experienced dark moments when you've felt alone. When the power of death felt present in your life. When you've been without. Easter Saturday, and the words of Isaiah, remind us that Jesus, too experienced what we do. Easter Saturday also reminds us of God's power to turn "without" into "with."

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, reminds them of the death they once knew — full of overwhelming passions, unsatisfying desires and destructive

cravings. These are dark sentences ending in wrath. But Paul tells them that in the face of this darkness and despair, God made them alive with Christ.

“Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil — the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!)”  
**(Ephesians 2:1-5, NLT).**

How did God do this for them? How does He do it for you?

Instead of leaving you alone in your darkness and despair, He enters into that pain to be with you. The cross on Friday and the grave on Saturday were the lengths to which God was willing to go to take your sin and death upon Himself.

He came to be with you in your darkness so you can be with Him in His life. By His grace, you do not have to remain in this Saturday despair, but you can live with Him in His new Sunday life.

The good news of the Easter story is that God made the way for you to be alive with Christ.

If you’re like me, the word “with” has never sounded so good.



# Reflect and Respond

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How are you experiencing the darkness and death of Saturday in your life right now? What would it look like to ask Jesus to be with you in those dark places so you can experience life with Him?

*Jesus, the darkness feels heavy. Though at times You seem silent, You have promised to be with those who put their trust in You. You have not left me alone. Thank You that You know what the darkness feels like and You've experienced life as a human. You can empathize with me. Jesus, give me the faith to believe that You are near, even when I can't sense Your presence. Amen.*

## Faith Asked

### Question:



**What does the Old Testament prophecy mean for me today?** Learn more about Isaiah 53 and how Jesus relates to our suffering world.



**Why does God allow suffering?** Explore more here.



**How do I face depression as a Christian?** To the depressed Christian, you're not alone.

*Josh Irby has been on staff with Cru® for the past 23 years and now serves as City Global Partnership Director for Europe. He is married with five kids and lives in Atlanta, Georgia.*

# Jesus is Risen!

What the Resurrection  
Means for You



## Day 8

TODAY'S READING:

### **John 20, NLT**

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. They were both running, but the other

disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings.

Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. Then they went home.

## **Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene**

Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. "Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her.

"Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

"Mary!" Jesus said.

She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

"Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.

## **Jesus Appears to His Disciples**

That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," he said. As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! Again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

## **Jesus Appears to Thomas**

One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side."

Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. "Peace be with you," he said.

Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!”

“My Lord and my God!”  
Thomas exclaimed.

Then Jesus told him, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.”

### **Purpose of the Book**

The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.



## **He is risen!**

The humble, servant king has conquered sin and death. He is alive.

For a unique period of human history, Jesus — God in human flesh — dwelt among us as a man. Being eternally God, when He came to earth, He became fully human as well. Because He is both God and man, He can be in heaven seated at the right hand of the Father and also dwells within each Christian through the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 1:13-14**).

Jesus is rightly called Immanuel, “God with us” (**Matthew 1:23**).

He took on flesh to live with us, die for us and be raised from the dead.

His presence, power and authority are not merely confined to upper rooms, open fields or sandy seashores. Jesus is in every home, workplace and recreational space as He accompanies His faithful followers into all spheres of life.

If you have trusted Jesus to forgive your sins and chosen to follow Him, He promises to be with you (**Ephesians 1:13-14**).

As a follower of Jesus, you can have confidence through His resurrection that your sins are forgiven. Everything Jesus promised in His teachings you can trust to be true. You are a child of God, and you will live forever with Him.

As you continually entrust your life to Jesus and follow Him, your life on earth will be transformed. Jesus promised that the result of a close relationship with Him is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (**Galatians 5:22-23, NLT**). These traits that He exhibits through you enable you to be an inviting and effective ambassador of His wherever you go.

Jesus has been raised from the dead, and He is with you always (**Matthew 28:20**)!

## Reflect and Respond

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Read **1 Corinthians 15:14-20**:

And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost!

And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead.

*Jesus, thank You that You have conquered sin and death, that You have paid for my sins, and that because of You, my faith is not useless. Thank You that You have power over the grave and You are the forever-reigning king of kings. Thank You that Your resurrection has provided the way for me to have new life now and for eternity. I rejoice in Your amazing grace, which promises that You are with me and will never leave me. Jesus, make me into the person You want me to be, and give me the faith to trust You. Show me how I can experience a life closer to You. Amen.*

## Faith Asked

### Question:



**What does the resurrection mean for me?** Learn about how the resurrection is still relevant to you today



**Did Jesus really rise from the dead?** Learn more about the evidence for the resurrection here.



**What is the resurrection and why is it foundational to the Christian faith?**

Explore more about how there is no Christianity without Jesus' resurrection.



**If you've never asked Jesus to come into your life and forgive your sins, there is no better time than the present.** Learn more here.

*David Lloyd works in Austin, Texas, with Global Church Movements to give every man, woman and child in the metro area ongoing opportunities to see and hear of Jesus' love for them through a united movement of mobilized churches.*



# Holy Week

The Path of the Cross  
and Resurrection

## Thank you for joining us this season!

We pray you've experienced Jesus as we journeyed through His path to the cross and resurrection. And we hope you've been able to explore more about Jesus and Christianity through the Faith Asked Questions.

We have much more to offer you in the year ahead. You can continue to hear from us and receive our best articles, latest resources and occasional news about special events and opportunities for you.

Scan the code below to subscribe to the Cru Newsletter, and we'll keep exploring together what it looks like to follow Jesus.



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