

# **H O L Y   W E E K**

**FAMILY DEVOTIONALS**

**FAMILY DEVO DESCRIPTION:**

During the week leading up to Easter, often called “Holy Week,” bring your family together for a daily devotional time reflecting on who Jesus is and what He has done for us. Each devotional is intended to help prepare you and your family to experience the darkness of Jesus’ last days leading to the cross and the celebration of His glorious resurrection on Easter Sunday. The devos will give you the opportunity to read the Bible together, respond, reflect on what you’ve read, and pray together, all in about five minutes. You are free to extend this time as long as it fits your family. As you lead your family, we pray these experiences will help you understand both the sorrow found in Jesus’ journey to the cross and the joy found in His resurrection.

**Set up:** Buy or collect six candles and something you can use to light them. Begin the Family Devo time with all six candles lit. Each day, at the end of the devo, you will be able to respond by choosing one family member to blow out one candle. The next day, light one less candle. On Friday, the last candle will be blown out. Easter Sunday you will get to light all six candles to celebrate that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead, just like He said He would.

**SUNDAY** (one week before Easter): Light all six candles.

Read these verses about how God created the whole world.

**Genesis 1:29-31 NIRV**

“Then God said, ‘I am giving you every plant on the face of the whole earth that produces its own seeds. I am giving you every tree that has fruit with seeds in it. All of them will be given to you for food. I am giving every green plant as food for all the land animals and for all the birds in the sky. I am also giving the plants to all the creatures that move along the ground. I am giving them to every living thing that breathes.’ And that’s exactly what happened. God saw everything he had made. And it was very good. There was evening, and there was morning. It was day six.”

**Genesis 3:23-24 NIRV**

“So the Lord God drove the man out of the Garden of Eden. He sent the man to farm the ground he had been made from. The Lord God drove him out and then placed angels on the east side of the garden. He also placed there a flaming sword that flashed back and forth. The angels and the sword guarded the way to the tree of life.”

God created the entire world and everything in it. Ask each person to name some of their favorite things God created. Encourage your family to listen to each other’s answers. Compare how different and beautiful each person’s answers are. God created the animals, the plants, the \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in with whatever was named) for people to enjoy. God also created Adam and Eve. His plan was for Adam and Eve to walk, talk, and have a close relationship with Him in the Garden of Eden. But their sins changed everything for them and for us.

Because of sin, we live separated from God. Sin causes there to be darkness in the hearts and lives of everyone who does not know Jesus.

**Respond:** Choose one family member to blow out one candle.

**Reflect:** Discuss together what sin is. Why is it so hard to do what is right? When do you feel most tempted to want something you don’t have?

**Pray together:** Jesus, help us to choose Your way. Help us to obey Your rules and to do what is right. Thank You Jesus for giving us Your Holy Spirit to help us. Amen.

**MONDAY:** Light five candles (leave one unlit).

Read these verses about Jesus entering Jerusalem.

**Matthew 21:6-11 NIRV**

“The disciples went and did what Jesus told them to do. They brought the donkey and the colt. They placed their coats on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their coats on the road. Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Some of the people went ahead of him, and some followed. They all shouted,

‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’

‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!’

‘Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up. The people asked, ‘Who is this?’

The crowds answered, ‘This is Jesus. He is the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.’”

God’s plan to live in relationship with us continues. God sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to live on this earth so people could know and believe in Him. As Jesus rode into the city, the people were so excited. They believed Jesus was going to be the king of the land and save them from evil people and unfair laws. People did not understand how Jesus would save them from much more than just physical things. People didn’t understand that Jesus was actually God’s Son and would carry their sins to the cross and die in their place.

**Respond:** Choose someone to blow out one candle.

**Reflect:** What does a king or queen do? Have you ever gone to see someone who is really important? Why did people celebrate Jesus coming into town? What might have you been thinking if you were there? Jesus is the Son of God, the King over all things. But He didn’t come to sit on a throne or live in a castle, He came to save us from sin. Jesus is mighty and mysterious; it is very hard to understand the difference between a king over the land and the King of all kings.

**Pray together:** Jesus, help us understand You more. We believe You are the King of kings, the ruler over everything. Help us discover more about who You really are. Amen.

**TUESDAY:** Light four candles (leave two candles unlit).

Read these verses about Jesus washing the disciples' feet.

**John 13:12-15 NIRV**

“When Jesus finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes. Then he returned to his place. ‘Do you understand what I have done for you?’ he asked them. ‘You call me “Teacher” and “Lord.” You are right. That is what I am. I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet. So you also should wash one another’s feet. I have given you an example. You should do as I have done for you.’”

When people arrived at a home during the Bible times, a servant would offer to wash their feet. It sounds strange to us today, because we all wash our own feet. Jesus was the guest at this home; someone should have offered to wash His feet, not the other way around. This had to be a misunderstanding! It made the disciples feel very uncomfortable. They couldn't understand why Jesus would ever do this.

People today often misunderstand who Jesus is and why He teaches us to look for ways to serve each other. Just like the disciples, we need Jesus to help us understand God's way is very different from the world's ways. Serving others is better than being served.

**Respond:** Choose someone to blow out one candle.

**Reflect:** When do you like others to serve you? Is it easier to be served than to serve? Name someone who has served you. Who could you serve today? Tomorrow, remember to ask each other if you did it.

**Pray together:** Jesus, help me show your love to \_\_\_\_\_ today by serving them. Jesus help me find ways to serve others every day this week. Amen.

**WEDNESDAY:** Light three candles (leave three candles unlit).

Read these verses about a man named Judas.

**Matthew 26:14-16 NIRV**

“One of the 12 disciples went to the chief priests. His name was Judas Iscariot. He asked, ‘What will you give me if I hand Jesus over to you?’ So they counted out 30 silver coins for him. From then on, Judas watched for the right time to hand Jesus over to them.”

One of Jesus’ closest friends chose money over Jesus. Judas had been with Jesus for at least three years. Judas knew a lot about Him, he had watched Jesus do miracles and some truly amazing things. Judas had listened to Him teach and tell stories about how to love others, but he didn’t understand how much Jesus really loved him.

**Respond:** Choose one person to blow out one candle.

**Reflect:** Who is someone you know that really loves you? How do you know how he or she loves you? Here is an example of knowing something in your head but struggling to believe it’s true: I know in my head that broccoli is very good for me; but when broccoli goes in my mouth, it is really hard to believe it is good for me. Can you think of an example of something your head knows is good, but it’s hard to believe in your heart? (Getting a shot, taking a bath, etc.) What is different about knowing someone loves you and believing someone loves you? Judas knew a lot about Jesus, but he did not believe with his heart that Jesus was more important than money or anything else.

**Pray Together:** Dear Jesus, help me not to believe lies about You. Help me to not be distracted by things and think they are more important than You. I know you are really God and You are more important than anything else in the world. Please help my heart to believe it too!

**THURSDAY:** Light two candles (leave four candles unlit).

Read these verses about Jesus praying in the Garden.

**Mark 14:32-38a NIRV**

“Jesus and his disciples went to a place called Gethsemane. Jesus said to them, ‘Sit here while I pray.’ He took Peter, James and John along with him. He began to be very upset and troubled. ‘My soul is very sad. I feel close to death,’ he said to them. ‘Stay here. Keep watch.’

He went a little farther. Then he fell to the ground. He prayed that, if possible, the hour might pass by him. ‘Abba, Father,’ he said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup of suffering away from me. But let what you want be done, not what I want.’ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. ‘Simon,’ he said to Peter, ‘are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray.’”

Jesus asked the disciples to watch and pray with Him in the garden. He wanted them to stay awake and be with Him. He did not want to be alone during this difficult time. He was grieving and upset. He knew what was about to happen to Him. The disciples couldn’t stay awake, even though Jesus asked them to do so three times.

**Respond:** Choose one person to blow out a candle.

**Reflect:** When is a time you tried to stay awake but couldn’t keep your eyes open? Think of a time when you couldn’t or didn’t do something you knew you should do. Talk about it together, and let everyone who wants to respond have a chance to share (parents be prepared to share a personal story). Tell about a time you had something really hard to do and you needed courage to do it.

**Prayer together.** Jesus, thank You for loving us even when we fail. Thank You that nothing we do or say changes how much You love us. Your love for us never changes! Amen.

**FRIDAY:** Light one candle (leave five unlit).

Read these verses about Jesus dying on the cross.

**John 19:16-18 NIRV**

“Finally, Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be nailed to a cross.

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. He had to carry his own cross. He went out to a place called the Skull. In the Aramaic language it was called Golgotha. There they nailed Jesus to the cross. Two other men were crucified with him. One was on each side of him. Jesus was in the middle.”

**John 19:40-42 NIRV**

“The two men took Jesus’ body. They wrapped it in strips of linen cloth, along with the spices. That was the way the Jews buried people. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden. A new tomb was there. No one had ever been put in it before. That day was the Jewish Preparation Day, and the tomb was nearby. So they placed Jesus there.”

**John 3:16 NIRV**

“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life.”

Jesus wants us to live with Him forever. The only way for that to happen was for Him to take our punishment. Because He loves us so much, He chose to take all of our sin, all of the wrong things we have done, the sin we will do, and take our place on the cross. Isn't this incredible? It is hard to understand this kind of love. Good Friday is a day to remember how good Jesus is. On this day thousands of years ago, Jesus was crucified, He died, and He was buried for the sins of every person in the world.

**Respond:** Pick someone to blow out the last candle.

**Reflect:** Have you ever been accused or blamed for something you didn't do? How did you feel about it? Why did Jesus do that for us?

**Pray together:** Jesus, we will never be able to understand why You love us so much. But we want to say thank You for what You did, for dying in our place and for taking our sins away forever! Thank You for being our Savior. Amen.

**SATURDAY:** Do not light any of the candles today.

**Reflect:** Find a time today when you can all look at the candles with no flame together. Try to imagine how hopeless the disciples and followers of Jesus must have felt. Talk about a time when you were sad or when you thought nothing would ever work out.

**Pray Together:** Jesus, teach us how to trust You even when we are sad and when nothing seems to be going right. Thank You for suffering and dying for our sins. We can't imagine how hard it must have been. Amen.

## **EASTER SUNDAY MORNING:**

Read these verses about when Mary discovered the empty tomb.

### **John 20:1-18 NIRV**

“Early on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. It was still dark. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the entrance. So she ran to Simon Peter and another disciple, the one Jesus loved. She said, ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb! We don’t know where they have put him!’

So Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. Both of them were running. The other disciple ran faster than Peter. He reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there. But he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him. He went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there. He also saw the funeral cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place. It was separate from the linen. The disciple who had reached the tomb first also went inside. He saw and believed. They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

But Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she cried, she bent over to look into the tomb. She saw two angels dressed in white. They were seated where Jesus’ body had been. One of them was where Jesus’ head had been laid. The other sat where his feet had been placed.

They asked her, ‘Woman, why are you crying?’

‘They have taken my Lord away,’ she said. ‘I don’t know where they have put him.’ Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn’t realize that it was Jesus.

He asked her, ‘Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?’

She thought he was the gardener. So she said, ‘Sir, did you carry him away? Tell me where you put him. Then I will go and get him.’

Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’

She turned toward him. Then she cried out in the Aramaic language, ‘Rabboni!’ Rabboni means Teacher.

Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me. I have not yet ascended to the Father. Instead, go to those who believe in me. Tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."'

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news. She said, 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her."

The tomb was empty! Jesus wasn't there. He had risen just like He said He would. This is the best news ever! It is the gospel, the good news. Jesus died on the cross; Jesus was buried, and three days later He rose from the grave. He was really dead and now He is really alive. The people were so amazed, they started telling everyone.

**Reflect:** Have you ever gotten a gift or a treat and you did nothing to deserve it? How is that like what Jesus did for us?

Have each person in the family think of one word to describe how you might have felt if you were the person looking into the tomb and discovered Jesus was not there anymore. And then saw Jesus standing next to you!

**Respond:** Light all six candles and celebrate that Jesus truly is the Light of the World! Jesus brings hope and healing. The joy of seeing and believing is beyond words. Jesus loves us so much that He came to the earth to prove He can save us from our sins! This is the truth! Hallelujah! Jesus is alive today!

**Pray together:** Oh Jesus, thank You for doing just what You said You would do. Thank You for suffering and dying in our place. Even though I cannot fully understand all that You did for me, and I cannot understand why You would do it, I am so very grateful You did. My faith is in You alone. What a free and undeserved gift You give to anyone who believes in You. Amen.