

# Easter Devotional

8-Day Devotional for Holy Week



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## *Easter Devotional*

My Grandma has the most beautiful ceramic nativity set she puts out in her home each Christmas. What's unusual about her nativity set is that it always includes a crystal cross. You don't often see a cross as part of a nativity set--crosses make us think of Easter, right? Grandma always quotes Ruth Graham, saying that, "every Nativity set should always include a cross because Jesus was born to die." That is the beautiful, sobering truth, isn't it? Jesus' birth was hope being born, but Jesus' death and resurrection was hope realized. The Christmas story just isn't complete without Easter and the road to Calvary.

For the 8 days of Holy Week, we will be reflecting on a different name of Jesus each day. The amazing thing about Jesus is that He is everything we need in each season of our life. Sometimes we need Him to be our Immanuel (our God who is with us always), sometimes we need Him to be our Prince of Peace, and yet other times we need to remember He was a Man of Sorrows and understands the deepest hurts of our heart.

Our dear friend Justina (age 16) painted these beautiful, water color Easter eggs highlighting some of the names of Jesus. To go along with this devotional, visit the website (see below) to download these Easter eggs (and a few extra) for FREE! Make them into a garland, use them on your Easter tree--be creative!

I will be praying for you and your family this Easter season as you reflect on the immeasurable sacrifice of Jesus' death and resurrection. I pray that you will come to know even deeper the great love of Jesus and how He is truly all you will ever need in any season of life.

Love and Blessings,  
Katie

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**\*\*Note:** All of our verses come from the NIV version, unless otherwise noted



## *Day 1*

### *Palm Sunday*

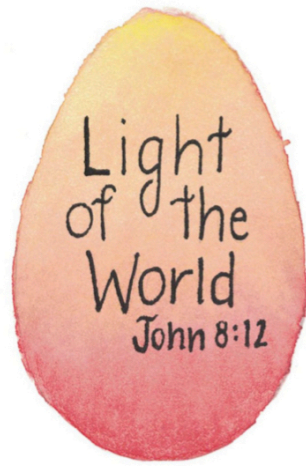
“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**.

Isaiah 9:6

The Israelites had been waiting for their promised Savior for what seemed like an eternity. They were expecting a valiant king with a mighty army to come for them. It's what they'd always known. They could not begin to imagine that the King who would come for them would come as a baby. He wouldn't come to overthrow the government that had been so terrible to them for so many years. Nope. Jesus came to save their hearts. He did not come as a mighty warrior; He came as the Prince of Peace.

This is Palm Sunday, the beginning of what we call “Holy Week”, the week leading up to Easter. Today we remember the day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey as people laid down palm branches across the road. As He traveled, they shouted “Hosanna to the Son of David!” and “Blessed is He who comes in the name of The Lord!” You can read the whole story in Matthew 21:1-9.

**Reflection:** He came to be Prince of Peace for you, for me and for the whole world. Is there something that makes you feel sad, or angry, or something that makes you worry? Pray to Jesus and allow Him to bring peace to your heart. There is nothing too big or too small- He cares about all the details of your heart.



## Day 2

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 8:12.

Have you ever been somewhere really dark? Maybe in a tent camping or hiking through a cave or maybe your living room after the power goes out? Sometimes it's so dark you cannot even see your hand in front of your face. Have you ever been afraid of the dark? Our youngest son is afraid of the dark and he likes to sleep with a nightlight to help him feel safer at night. Light is a very powerful thing. When there is even the tiniest ray of light, darkness loses its power.

When Jesus called Himself the Light of the World, He was referring to bringing light to people's hearts. Not only did He call Himself the Light of the World, He said that we, too, are the light of the world! For those of us who invite Jesus into our hearts, we become beacons of His light- like little nightlights in a dark world.

**Reflection:** One of the greatest ways we can shine the light of Jesus is by serving those around us. Is there someone you know that needs help today? It doesn't have to be anything big. Maybe you know someone who needs a hug or for you to tell them you are praying for them. Little acts like these are great ways of shining Jesus' light and helping people know and feel the love of Jesus.



### Day 3

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call Him **Immanuel**.

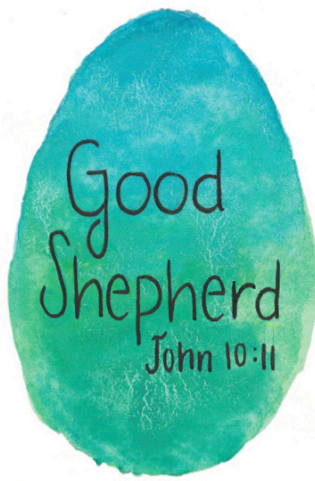
Isaiah 7:14

When you were born, your parents gave you a name. Maybe you were named after a family member or a person they admire or look up to. Maybe they picked your name because of its meaning. We did a mixture of both for our boys. In the book of Isaiah (in the Old Testament) Jesus is called Immanuel, which means "God with us". What an incredibly personal name. God was prepping the world for a very personal Savior.

When God eventually sent Jesus into the world, He wanted everyone to know that the King of Kings, the Creator of the universe, had come near. He wasn't far away or distant or out of reach, but He was right here with us.

At Christmas we remember the time that Jesus was born, our Immanuel who was here with us on earth. At Easter, we remember that through His death and resurrection, He gave us the chance to be with Him forever; our Immanuel for all time.

**Reflection:** What is on your heart today? What would you say to Jesus if He were right in front of you? Even though we cannot see Jesus now, He is always with us. You can pray and talk to Him anytime as though He were just sitting across the table. Don't hesitate to bring Him all your cares and worries--He cares about the deepest parts of your heart and He loves you.



## *Day 4*

I am the **good shepherd**. The good shepherd lays down his life  
for the sheep.

John 10:11

For several years we raised chickens in our backyard. They were our babies and they were quite spoiled. Each time we would open up our back door they would come running at the sound of our voices. They knew they were ours and they knew we would protect and care for them.

A shepherd helps care for his flock of sheep. He knows his sheep very well and they come at just the sound of His voice. He feeds them, cares for them when they are sick and protects them against any danger--even fighting off predators like bears or lions!

Jesus called himself the "Good Shepherd" and we are His flock. He knows the depths of our hearts and loves us more than we could ever imagine. Just as a shepherd would lay down his own life to protect his sheep, Jesus laid down His life to save us from death.

**Reflection:** Have you ever been afraid of something? I think we're all afraid at some point. Just remember in those moments you are afraid that you have a Good Shepherd who is always there for you and you are more precious to Him than anything else in the world.



## Day 5

See, my **servant** will act wisely;  
he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

Isaiah 52:13.

Do you know what a servant is? It's someone who helps do jobs or tasks for someone else- sometimes they are paid and sometimes they just serve because they care. Jesus spent His entire life here on earth serving others. He was the King of Kings and usually kings had people serving them, not the other way around. However, it says in Matthew 20:28: "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many".

Just hours before Jesus was crucified on the cross, He spent the evening with His closest friends. They had dinner and spent time just being together. To show them just how much He loved them, Jesus washed each of His friends' feet; their nasty, stinky, dirty, well traveled feet. Yuck! That was a job that was usually done by a servant...but Jesus didn't come to BE served, but to serve others. So that night, the King of Kings, the One who created those very feet, knelt down and showed the world what kind of Savior He really was. He showed how much He loved by how He served.

**Reflection:** Jesus spent His entire life serving those around Him. Serving someone else is one of the greatest ways to show how much you love them. Our dear friend and Pastor, John, often said that good deeds (like serving someone) open the door for the good news (the story of Jesus). Look for ways big and small each day that you can serve those around you. Your good deed may help them come to know Jesus, maybe even for the first time!





## Day 6

### Good Friday

He is despised and rejected by men, a **Man of sorrows** and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Isaiah 53:3, NKJV

Jesus was rejected by His own people- the very ones He came to save. At the end of His life, He was betrayed by one of His closest friends. Jesus was even forced to carry the very cross they would nail His hands to. He was the King of Kings, but instead of wearing a crown of the most precious jewels, they placed a painful crown of thorns atop His head. He never did anything wrong and yet he was sentenced to die like a criminal. Jesus took the punishment of every wrong decision that had ever been made or ever would be made. Jesus died so we wouldn't have to. Never was there a more lonely person in the history of the world than when Jesus was alone, hanging on the cross. He was truly a Man of Sorrows.

**Reflection:** During our toughest times, when we feel sad or alone, or rejected or hurt, He understands. He has been there. However, unlike Jesus, we are not alone in our times of deepest sorrows. He is there with us. Even when it feels like the whole world is against us, He is for us. He believes in us and He loves us more than we could possibly imagine.





## Day 7

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

1 John 4:8

One day, during Bible time at school, my son's teacher was sharing with the kids the story of the cross. While she was telling the story, she passed out different things for the kids to feel--a small crown of thorns, pieces of wood like those on a cross, etc. When she pulled out the nails she said "and these represent the nails that held Jesus on the cross." My oldest interrupted her story and said "but teacher, it wasn't the nails that held Jesus to the cross--it was love." And that is the truth. Nothing had the power to hold Jesus to the cross--not even the nails. What held Jesus to the cross was love. He loved us so much He chose to die on the cross for us.

**Reflection:** Spend some time thinking about how much Jesus loves you today. Just like nothing had the power to hold Jesus to the cross, nothing has the power to separate you from His love. He loves you unconditionally, just as you are right at this very moment, and nothing you do will ever change that.



## Day 8

### *Easter Sunday*

Today in the town of David a **Savior** has been born to you;  
He is the Messiah, the Lord.

Luke 2:11

At the end of these 8 days of reflection, I am again reminded of my Grandma's nativity scene. In addition to the shepherds, Mary, Joseph, the angels, baby Jesus and the stable animals, she always includes a beautiful crystal cross because Jesus was born to die. It's hard to think about, but it's true.

However, what her nativity should REALLY include is an empty tomb because He wasn't born just to die. No! Jesus was born to LIVE AGAIN. His relentless, never-ending, unconditional, always and forever love couldn't be stopped by death. On that glorious, Sunday morning, our Savior, Jesus Christ, rose from the grave in victory! So go tell it on the mountain, go shout it from the rooftops: Jesus Christ our Savior is risen indeed!

**Reflection:** Jesus did a lot of things while He was here on earth: He healed the sick, He fed thousands of people, He befriended the lonely, gave sight to the blind and many, many other miracles. Those are all wonderful things, but the reason Jesus came to earth was to be our Savior. He died on the cross and took the punishment so we wouldn't have to. The greatest decision you could make with your life is to trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Never forget, the heart of the Easter story is love.

Jesus said in John 10:10:

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."



## *The Bridge*

### *Epilogue*

Easter was only two days away and I had a few things left on my list to finish getting ready. As the mom of 2 and 3½ year old boys, it's not easy getting anything on that to-do list accomplished! The second the boys woke up from their naps we were off and running! The usual stream-of-consciousness dialogue that typically filled my backseat was displaced for a moment by silence from two little bedheads still waking up. After a few big yawns and eye rubs, my 3½ year old started talking.

"Mommy, I had a dream when I was asleep."

"Really? Tell me about it", I said.

"I had a dream about Jesus on the cross" he answered.

Needless to say, he had my attention.

When our oldest was born, my husband and I were so excited to teach him all about Jesus—to share stories, teach him songs, to help him know about the unconditional love and grace of Jesus. We talked all about how we celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas—we loved sharing the stories of Jesus, but we had no idea what to do with Easter. How do you explain to a child the reality of the story of the cross? The truest story of Easter is more gruesome and violent than any movie script. On top of that, we were blessed with two boys with very sensitive hearts.

We did our best to simplify the story and we relied heavily on our "Jesus Storybook Bible" to help where our words failed. Even simplified, our son's heart was still troubled. He would see the pictures in his storybook Bible and he was so bothered. He would always say: "Why doesn't Jesus have a shirt on, Mommy?" or "Why are those pokey things on his head". Every question broke my heart and stopped me in my tracks—some questions I just didn't know how to answer.

He was now more than halfway through his first year of preschool with the most amazing teachers. Just that week his Bible teacher, Mrs. Medlin, had passed around what she called "resurrection eggs" with tactile symbols of different parts of the Easter story. (Can we just pause for a minute and say "thank you, Jesus" for the amazing Sunday school teachers, Awana leaders, Bible teachers, etc. that help instill the Bible in the hearts of our children? Thank you, Mrs. Medlin—you are the best at what you do and we are thankful every day for you!). Through these resurrection eggs, Ryan was finally beginning to

understand the story of Easter in a way that his heart could handle. And then The Lord filled in the gaps.

“Mommy, I had a dream when I was asleep. I had a dream about Jesus on the cross. He was on the cross, Mommy. He didn’t have his shirt and the pokey things were hurting his head. And the nails were hurting his hands. He was so sad, mommy.”

“Oh, honey, I’m so sorry, I know He must have been so sad. Do you remember anything else?” I replied.

“Well, after I saw Jesus on the cross, it got really dark--so dark I couldn’t see Him anymore.”

I continued to drive on in silence.

“And then it got light again and I saw Him. He had his shirt back on! And the pokey things weren’t poking him anymore, mommy! And the nails weren’t hurting Him anymore! And He was happy!”

At this point I had tears streaming down my face. And if that wasn’t enough, he kept talking.

“And then I saw something else, mommy. Behind Jesus was a really, really, reeeeeeaallllllly long bridge. And there were lots and lots of people standing on the other side.”

My tears had nearly turned to sobs, but I tried my best to control myself to not startle him or stop him from sharing his heart. God Himself had revealed the story of the cross in just a way that my sensitive little 3½ year son’s heart could take it. Not only that, I believe, He gave him a glimpse of Heaven— and on Good Friday, no less.

I tried to ask him if he saw anything else, but that’s all he shared. He was content with the simplicity that Jesus wasn’t sad anymore, that He got His shirt back and that the pokey things couldn’t hurt Him anymore, that Jesus was alive and happy.

In His very kind and personal way, Jesus reached down that afternoon and revealed to my sweet boy that the Easter story was, in fact, a happy story. Unimaginable pain, suffering and death gave birth to life and hope in the greatest story ever told.

The heart of the story of Easter is love and He loves each of us exactly where we’re at—no matter your age, the color of your skin, your history, your list of wrong doings or your list of good deeds. Nothing can nor ever will change how much He loves us. Wherever you’re at in life, know that Jesus will meet you right where you are. Jesus’ death and resurrection built a bridge between God and us and the only thing it takes from us is the faith to step across.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16