
COUNTDOWN TO EASTER

A READ, WRITE & LIVE IT – BIBLE STUDY



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INTRODUCTION

These interactive "Read, Write, Learn" Easter Bible study lesson devotions can help keep ourselves and our families Christ focused as we look towards Easter! Writing Scripture has become such a pleasure in my time with God in addition to reading & meditating on it.

As we turn towards focusing on Jesus' last days on this earth in flesh, let's read through the Gospels chronologically taking note of all God has to say to us.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

If this is for personal study, take each day entering into a time of reading, writing and listening to God speak. He can always show us something new, something for right where we are in this moment of life. Be open. Seek His face. Listen in the wait and draw close to Him. Rest in His presence.

WITH YOUR FAMILY OR CLASS

These may also be used as family or group Bible study lessons or devotions. Allow each person to read and write the Scriptures silently. Read them aloud together and discuss. Most lessons also include hands-on activities to help anchor the lesson in minds and hearts. Pray together as you each strive to live it out.

Let's Read, Write & Learn as we soak in God's precious Word and countdown to Easter!

WORSHIP



“SHE HAS DONE WHAT SHE COULD; SHE HAS ANOINTED MY BODY BEFOREHAND FOR THE BURIAL. TRULY I SAY TO YOU, WHEREVER THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED IN THE WHOLE WORLD, WHAT THIS WOMAN HAS DONE WILL ALSO BE SPOKEN OF IN MEMORY OF HER.” MARK 14:8-9

1. **Read**- John 12:1-11, Mark 14:8-9
2. **Write** - Mark 14:8-9
3. **Learn** - Mary gave WHAT she could WHEN she could as an act of worship! She poured out her love on Jesus. Not everyone understood, but she poured out her heart nonetheless. She demonstrated an act of pure worship. How will we demonstrate our worship & love for Jesus this Easter season? What can we selflessly give to Him...time, possessions, talents, our treasure?

DISCUSS

Discuss with your family, class or friend, or think about the following:

- When did this take place? (vs. 1 - before the Passover celebration; before Jesus entered Jerusalem)
- Who was Mary and why did she do this? (Lazarus's sister; close friend of Jesus)
- How much was the perfume worth? (vs. 5 - In today's terms, this amount would equal a year's wages!)
- What was so important about this event? (vs. 7 - Jesus says she was anointing Him for His burial. He saw her faith & belief in Him! Okay...it wasn't in your reading, but please read what Mark included in Mark 14:8. "She has done what she could;" It is so important that we do what we can while we can like Mary. She came to worship & anoint Jesus while she could with all that she had. May we approach each day as she did!

LIVE IT OUT

Today or this week live out this Easter Bible study lesson by giving away something for the sole purpose of loving Jesus. It may be an hour of your time you give to someone that needs a listening ear, a helping hand, or a visit so they know they matter. It may be an amount of money you send to Compassion International, give to your church or local food bank or a person you know that is in need. It may be your talent you can offer to someone in the name of Jesus. Whatever it is, give with sacrifice, give with your whole self for the purpose of honoring Jesus. Let your giving be an act of pure worship.

OBEDY IN THE LITTLE

"AND HE *SENT TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES AND *SAID TO THEM, "GO INTO THE CITY, AND A MAN WILL MEET YOU CARRYING A PITCHER OF WATER; FOLLOW HIM;"
MARK 14:13

1. **Read**- Mark 14:12-16
2. **Write** - Mark 14:13
3. **Learn** - This Easter Bible study devotion causes us to ask ourselves - are we willing to obey God even in the little things? What about when He doesn't give us all the facts? The disciples obeyed. The man with the water obeyed. Never think what God asks us to do is too small or too menial - let's just trust and obey. What we may see as small, God says is important.

DISCUSS

Discuss with your family, class or friend, or think about the following:

- Which two disciples would you think Jesus sent on this mission? Why? (Look up Luke 22:7 for the answer) Jesus sent two of His closest friends on what may have seemed like such a menial task or mission. Why do you think He chose these two?
- What characteristic did Jesus give about the man that would meet them? (He would be carrying a jar of water.) Do you think this was significant for a reason?
- Jesus only gave them two tasks - to find and follow. How can we apply that mission in our lives today?
- With such little information, do you think the disciples had questions or simply obeyed? What can we learn from their example?
- Think about the church, do some "tasks" or jobs seem small and unimportant? Which would you say was the most important job? The least important? What do you think God would say?

LIVE IT OUT

Countdown to Easter by looking around your home or church for what would be considered "small" jobs or things others may think are "beneath them" that need to be done and do them! As you do, remember as The Church we are the Body of Christ and all are important as we work together.

As a family or small group, make a list of these jobs. Work together, anonymously or secretly, to complete them without anyone knowing who did it. Or let each make their own list to secretly accomplish on their own.



SERVE

“IF YOU KNOW THESE THINGS, YOU ARE BLESSED IF YOU DO THEM.” JOHN 13:17

1. **Read:** John 13:3-17
2. **Write:** John 13:17
3. **Learn:** To Serve Others

Jesus gave us the ultimate example of serving! He left Heaven and bent low to earth living as fully man and still fully God because of His great love for each of us. As Jesus bent to wash the disciples' feet, He did what the lowliest of servants normally would do. Serving takes "bending down" - making ourselves lower than others. Jesus laid aside His glory and position beside the Father in Heaven and came down to earth to live as a man and ultimately lay down His life for us that we may have life through Him.

Serving takes on the attitude of humbleness - the opposite of pride. C.S. Lewis described it this way - "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less." How can we follow Jesus' example this Holy week? We do this by making ourselves lower for Christ's sake, humbling ourselves to serve others.

"Now that we know these things, we will be blessed if we do them." Let's take action and serve others - not just this week, but every day that others may see Christ in us - "the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

DISCUSS

- Who do you think should have been washing feet? Why was it odd that Jesus did it?
- What do you think Jesus meant when He said "you are blessed when you do them"?
- What are some ways we can "wash others' feet" in everyday life?
- How does Jesus "wash our feet" even now?

LIVE IT OUT

If you are doing this with your family or a small group, put this Easter Bible study into action! Have a large bowl or container of water and towels waiting. Bend down and begin washing each of their feet while also praying over them. Playing Christian worship music in the background helps place focus on this act of serving as worship and not

something awkward. Have them think of what it must have been like for Jesus to wash the disciples' feet.

Lay aside the towel, and continue in a time of prayer allowing others as they feel led to wash someone's feet.

There is something very humbling and moving about someone else bending down low to wash your feet. It can be a beautiful experience and help us to imagine what it must have been like for the disciples as Jesus washed their feet.

REMEMBER



"FOR THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE COVENANT, WHICH IS POURED OUT FOR MANY FOR FORGIVENESS OF SINS."
MATTHEW 26:28

1. **Read:** Matthew 26:20-29
2. **Write:** Matthew 26:28
3. **Learn:** Remember the Cup

Many times, busyness causes us to lose focus and forget. Jesus knew this would happen to His followers; therefore, He instituted the Lord's Supper or Communion. He knew we would need to be reminded of His sacrifice and gift of salvation and eternal life. He also knew we would need to be reminded of the hope we have in this life because of Him. One of Satan's greatest tools against us as believers is "distraction". Things get busy or overwhelming, and it's easy to lose sight of Christ and eternity. It's easy to lose sight of hope.

For this Easter devotion, we take time to remember when we partake of the Lord's Supper. We remember His body that was broken which also reminds us of His humanity and suffering. He understands our pain and life struggles.

We take time to remember His blood, His very life that was poured out for us. His perfect blood that is the only hope we have for atonement - the forgiveness for our sin. Pure & sinless blood. God's blood.

May this Easter Bible study cause us to take time to remember...and then rejoice!

DISCUSS

- What were Jesus and the disciples celebrating? (Passover)
- When did God first command the Israelites to celebrate the Passover? What was it supposed to help them remember? (Exodus 12)
- How does the first Passover point to Jesus?
- What are some things that are hard to remember? Why is that?
- What are some things that are very important that we remember?

LIVE IT OUT

Just for fun have a contest by playing some type of memory game or activity with this Easter Bible study.

* You can play a visual memory game by placing several items on a tray or write several words or numbers on a sheet of paper. Each person has about 15 seconds to see what's on the tray or paper; then cover it and have everyone write or say as many things as they can

remember seeing. This can also be done as a team with everyone contributing to one list in a certain time limit to see how many the group can remember together.

* Another fun activity is to play "Name that Tune."

* Memory Scavenger Hunt - Have a list of various things people remember - your first phone number or address, your spouse's or parent's birthday, the first U.S. President. Modify the items according to the age & type of group. Give everyone one minute to fill out as much as they can and see who could remember the most. Again, this can be done as a team or family effort rather than competitive.

The point is, we remember A LOT of random things, yet sometimes we can lose focus or forget the most important things. Work together to memorize a verse of Scripture pointing out the importance of remembering God's Word and also all Christ has done for us.

Bible verse suggestions: John 3:16 & Romans 5:8

This week every time you see or use a cup let it remind you of Jesus' life and love He poured out for us.

ABIDE



"I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE
BRANCHES;" JOHN 15:5A

1. **Read:** John 15:1-17
2. **Write:** John 15:5
3. **Learn:** Abide in Christ

Abide...one of the last instructions Jesus gave His disciples as well as us. To abide means to dwell in Him, stay connected to Jesus as a branch to a vine.

Think of vines that produce fruit - blackberries, raspberries, grapes, melons, etc. Take a minute to talk or think about favorite fruits and why they are favorites.

Jesus doesn't say we have to produce fruit; we are just to bear it. We are just to remain connected to the vine and fruit will naturally come forth. Fruit is what identifies a vine, tree or bush. A grape vine is given that name because it produces grapes. An apple tree is identified by its apples. What type fruit identifies our life?

If we are abiding in Jesus, we should be identified by the fruit of the Holy Spirit - "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23) This does not mean we work to produce this fruit. The Holy Spirit does that for us...IF we are connected to the Vine - Jesus. The fruit is evidence of our relationship with Jesus.

A branch receives nutrients and all it needs through the vine. Spiritually we receive all we need from Jesus as we spend time in His presence through prayer and take in the nutrition of His Word. Jesus goes on to say in verses 4-5 that apart from Him, we can do nothing; a branch cannot produce fruit if it is not connected to the vine.

DISCUSS

- Who does Jesus say is the true vine? (He is.)
- Who is the vinedresser? (God the Father)
- What are we to be? (the branches)
- Who bears much fruit? (He who abides in Jesus & Jesus abides in him.)
- What does Jesus say we can do on our own? (Nothing)

LIVE IT OUT

Take a walk somewhere in nature and try identifying plants by what you can see, what they bear. Break off a branch to take home with you; leave it sitting around the house where everyone can see what happens to it when it is no longer connected or abiding in its source of life and remind you of the truth in this Easter Bible study.

PRAY



"I DO NOT ASK ON BEHALF OF THESE ALONE, BUT FOR
THOSE ALSO WHO BELIEVE IN ME THROUGH THEIR
WORD;"
JOHN 17:20

1. **Read:** John 17
2. **Write:** John 17:20-21
3. **Learn:** Jesus prayed for us!

As Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane knowing He is about to face death on the cross, He stops and takes time to think of you and think of me and pray for us! The Bible says He continues to intercede as our advocate even now as He is at the right hand of the Father. (1 John 2:1)

DISCUSS

- What name did Jesus call God? Count how many times He uses this title for God in chapter 17. Take time to think about all this means.
- What does Jesus say is eternal life in verse 3? Think about the people you know and what it means to really know someone. Talk about how this "know" is so much more than just knowing facts about someone.
- What two groups of people does Jesus pray for in this chapter?
- Why do you think Jesus chose to pray this prayer out loud in the presence of His disciples?
- What can we learn about prayer from reading Jesus' prayer in chapter 17?
- What do we learn about God through this prayer?

LIVE IT OUT

This week take time to pray out loud for and with someone. This may be with your family, your class or even a stranger. You may even want to write out a prayer for someone and send it to them. Aren't we thankful John wrote out the words Jesus prayed for us?!

I AM

"SO WHEN HE SAID TO THEM, "I AM HE," THEY DREW BACK AND FELL TO THE GROUND." JOHN 18:6

1. **Read:** John 18
2. **Write:** John 18:4-8
3. **Learn:** There is power in His name; truly He was, is and will always be the great "I AM"!

This personal name of God sets Him apart. I AM points to the fact that God IS. He has always existed and will always exist.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty." Revelation 1:8

Throughout the Scripture, the very names of God point to His attributes and character that He might be known.

Webster's Dictionary defines "attribute" as:

- an inherent characteristic
- an object closely associated with or belonging to a person, thing or office a word ascribing a quality
-

This name - YHWH, Yahweh, Jehovah, LORD, I AM, points to:

- He is self-existent...He does exist and no one created Him.
- He is eternal...He has no beginning or end; He will always be.
- He is immutable...He does not change.

"For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed." Malachi 3:6

DISCUSS

- Where was Jesus at this point? Who were with Him?
- Who arrived soon after Jesus got there? How did they know where to find Him?
- Did this take Jesus by surprise? (Reference verse 4)
- Go back to the first time God used this personal name for Himself and read Exodus 3:14-15. What does God say about this name?

LIVE IT OUT

This week be aware of every time you say the words “I am...”; let it be a reminder of the great I AM – He is with you; He is able; He sees & knows. Also, as you read the Bible, take note of all the times you see LORD in all capital letters and let it remind you of this special, personal name of God. Take time to take deep breaths remembering God's attributes and that He wants to be known by us.

A fun activity is to make an acrostic with the letters of the alphabet with names or phrases that describe God; for example: A – able, B – bountiful, C – Creator, D – divine, E – enough, etc. If you get stuck like I did on Q, use a phrase like “Quieter of my soul.” You can also do this using other words like Father, Master, Jesus, etc., and think of words or phrases for each letter.

A CROWN & A CROSS

PILATE ALSO WROTE AN INSCRIPTION AND PUT IT ON THE CROSS. IT WAS WRITTEN, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS."
JOHN 19:19

1. **Read:** John 19:1-20
2. **Write:** John 19:15-18, 30
3. **Learn:** The King of Kings stepped down from Heaven and took our punishment, our place on the cross.

DISCUSS

Jesus has already told Pilate His Kingdom is not of this world. Pilate continues to refer to Jesus as the King of the Jews when asking the people what he should do with Him. They cried out to crucify Jesus. He has now been flogged and beaten and the soldiers continue mocking Him. He is alone. His disciples have abandoned Him. He endures it all for us.

- What did the soldiers place on Jesus?
- What charge did the people bring against Jesus in verse 7?
- What did Pilate have written to place on Jesus' cross? Why do you suppose he had it written in three languages?
- What did the soldiers do at the foot of Jesus' cross? Do we ever play games instead of worshipping Jesus?
- Who of Jesus' followers were near the cross?
- What were Jesus' last words?

LIVE IT OUT

Easter Bible Study: This week notice sharp things you come into contact with and let them remind you how the thorns must have pierced Jesus' head and how the nails pierced his hands and feet.

Also take time to notice crosses around you; they may be the panes of a window, two pencils lying across each other, on a piece of jewelry or clothing, the letter "t" as you are reading or writing, etc. Let them remind you of all Jesus did for you.

WAIT

"NOW IN THE PLACE WHERE HE WAS CRUCIFIED THERE WAS A GARDEN, AND IN THE GARDEN A NEW TOMB IN WHICH NO ONE HAD YET BEEN LAID."

JOHN 19:41

1. **Read:** John 19:31-42
2. **Write:** John 19:41-42
3. **Learn:** Even in the "wait", God is at work!

DISCUSS

My friend Joy wrote the following to think about:

Friday evening to Sunday morning was a time of waiting - waiting in fear, waiting in hiding, waiting in doubt. It is in this blank space of waiting that hope can be found. It is in this blank space that things seem to be quiet and nothing is happening. Have you ever lived in a "blank space" moment?

It is quiet, things seem hopeless, and it appears that nothing will ever change. But, it is in this blank space that the greatest miracle is taking place. May we never forget that in our blank spaces we have a mighty God that is still in the miracle business. He is still moving mountains on our behalf. He is still breaking chains. He is still resurrecting dreams. He is still saving lives. He is still on His throne! He sees! He knows! He's working even when all we see is a blank space!

LIVE IT

Easter Bible Study: This week as you find yourself in places of waiting, use it as a time of prayer and worship in expectation of God working in your life and the world around you.

As a family or group, set a timer for three minutes to represent the waiting of three days. Use this as a time of prayer or a time of thanksgiving or just sit still and quiet "feeling" the sense of waiting and anticipation.

Another fun activity is to make "Surprise Rolls" or "Resurrection Rolls". These can be made on Easter morning for family or during a Sunday school hour; they only take about 15 minutes to make and then 15 minutes to bake! (Recipe & Instructions included in appendix)

LIVE!

"MARY MAGDALENE *CAME, ANNOUNCING TO THE DISCIPLES, "I HAVE SEEN THE LORD," AND THAT HE HAD SAID THESE THINGS TO HER."

JOHN 20:18

1. **Read:** John 20
 2. **Write:** John 20:14-16
 3. **Learn:** Because He lives, there is hope!
-

DISCUSS

- Talk about times we may experience a surprise. How do surprises make us feel?
 - What do you think Mary Magdalene was expecting to find when she went to the tomb?
 - Who were the first two people she found and told?
 - When you have exciting and unexpected news, who would you run to tell?
 - Who did Mary think Jesus was? Why may it be significant that Mary did not recognize Jesus until He said her name? Isn't it wonderful to know Jesus knows us each individually also?
-

LIVE IT OUT

The Good News of Jesus Christ is such exciting news! This week share it with someone else. Remember - because He lives, there is hope to share with others!

APPENDIX

RESURRECTION OR SURPRISE ROLLS

Ingredients

1 can crescent rolls (or enough for each person to make and have one)

1 package regular marshmallows

1/2 stick butter

1/4 cup sugar

1 tsp cinnamon

Directions - Resurrection Rolls

Step 1

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Step 2

Melt butter in shallow dish. Mix sugar & cinnamon together in a separate dish. Stop and take time to read Luke 23:50-56:

"Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, 51 who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. 52 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. 54 It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. 55 The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. 56 Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment."

Encourage participants to think about these verses as they add the cinnamon spice to the marshmallow and wrap it in the dough.

Step 3

Roll a marshmallow in butter, then sugar mixture, and place in the center of a crescent roll.

Step 4

Cover the marshmallow with the dough pinching seams closed securely and place on a greased cookie sheet. Repeat with each of the resurrection rolls.

Have them check to make sure their seems are sealed tightly as you read Matthew 27:62-65. Have them take time to think about how well guarded and sealed the tomb was.

62 "The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. 63 "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' 64 So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

65 "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard."

Step 5

Place in oven to bake for 10-15 minutes; allow to cool a bit before serving because melted marshmallow will be hot!

While the rolls are baking have everyone be thinking what it must have been like for the disciples and other followers as they grieved His death and waited. Ask if they think His followers remembered things Jesus had said about His resurrection?

Have them look up John 2:18-20, Matthew 12:39-40, and Matthew 16:21.

Read Luke 24:1-8 after removing the rolls from the oven. Then pray a prayer of praise and thanksgiving before serving them to eat. (This will also allow the marshmallow to cool a bit!

"On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " 8 Then they remembered his words."

Have everyone open their rolls and see that they are now empty; say all together "He is risen!" and then enjoy eating the Resurrection rolls!

Resurrection rolls are a great alternative to cinnamon rolls on Easter morning and will definitely add to the excitement of celebrating that Jesus is alive!