

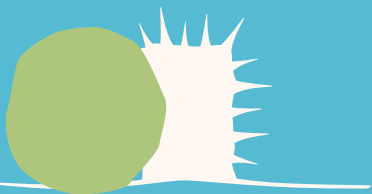
15-DAY

FAMILY



EASTER

FOCUS



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FAMILY
EASTER
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A photograph of a family of three walking away from the camera on a gravel path in a park. The sun is low in the sky, creating a warm, golden glow. The family consists of a man, a woman, and a small child. The word "INTRODUCTION" is overlaid in large, blue, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image.

INTRODUCTION

15-DAY FAMILY EASTER FOCUS

In the days prior to Easter, the world will celebrate the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To help you and your family prepare for this special season, a 15-day reading plan, discussion guide, prayer prompts and suggested activities are provided in this booklet. The reading plan includes 15 days of reading followed by discussion questions to help foster conversation. As an added bonus, there are optional activities to use every day. The discussion questions are broken into three age-appropriate categories:

- Younger children: preschool age
- Older children: elementary school age
- Teenager: middle and high school age

This booklet will help you experience the Easter story from other perspectives and continue the rhythm in the days leading up to Easter. Your family has the flexibility to use the 15 days in a way that best fits your schedule. Take a break during the weekends or go straight through. You may also choose to use this focus throughout the year because we hope you and your family will continue in the rhythm of reading God's Word and growing as disciples together.

REPEAT THEM TO YOUR
CHILDREN. TALK ABOUT
THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN
YOUR HOUSE AND WHEN
YOU WALK ALONG THE ROAD,
WHEN YOU LIE DOWN AND
WHEN YOU GET UP.

DEUTERONOMY 6:7

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

DAY 1

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

When they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethpage at the Mount of Olives, Jesus then sent two disciples, telling them, "Go into the village ahead of you. At once you will find a donkey tied there with her foal. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them at once." This took place so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled:

Tell Daughter Zion, "See, your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The disciples went and did just as Jesus directed them. They brought the donkey and its foal; then they laid their clothes on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their clothes on the road; others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them on the road. Then the crowds who went ahead of him and those who followed shouted:

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in an uproar, saying, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

MATTHEW 21:1-11

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: What if someone famous was coming to our house? What would we do to get our home ready to make them feel welcome and honored? What did the people in the story do to make Jesus feel welcome and honored?

OLDER CHILD: When Jesus came into Jerusalem, the people shouted and waved palm branches much like a cheerleader would wave pompoms when a sports star comes into a sports arena. The people shouted “Hosanna” as a cheer to celebrate Jesus’ arrival. These were special ways to honor Jesus. Create a cheer with your family to celebrate and honor Jesus. What would you want to include in your cheer?

TEENAGER: In the passage, the crowds who went ahead of him and those who followed shouted: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” Why did Jesus allow this kind of public worship to happen when he had prevented it so many times before (see Matthew 9:30)?

Prayer Prompt:

Ask the Lord to show you and your family new ways to worship Jesus today.

Activity:

MEMORIZE A VERSE

Memorize a verse from the Easter story as a family. Here are a few suggestions: Matthew 26:39, Mark 14:62, Luke 23:43, John 19:30.

DAY 2

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

Jesus went into the temple and threw out all those who were buying and selling. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves. He said to them, "It is written, my house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of thieves!"

CHILDREN PRAISE JESUS

The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. When the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonders that he did and the children shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant and said to him, "Do you hear what these children are saying?" Jesus replied, "Yes, have you never read: You have prepared praise from the mouths of infants and nursing babies?" Then he left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

MATTHEW 21:12-17

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: In today's Scripture, we learned one way children worshiped Jesus. What are your favorite ways to worship Jesus both at home and at church?

OLDER CHILD: When Jesus went into the temple, He saw something that upset Him greatly. What did Jesus see? What did Jesus do to the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves? Why? What are things that upset Jesus today?

TEENAGER: Based on today's passage, think of yourself as the temple. What tables would Jesus want to overturn in your life and what would He want to drive out of you?

Prayer Prompt:

Ask the Lord to show you and each family member things in your lives that do not please Him.

Activity:

SEEK RECONCILIATION

Read Matthew 5:23-24. Ask the Lord to remind you of someone you have sinned against and need to ask for his or her forgiveness. After you have sought reconciliation, read Romans 12:18. What are ways that you can "live at peace with everyone?"

DAY 3

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS

When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he told his disciples, “You know that the Passover takes place after two days, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.” Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the courtyard of the high priest, who was named Caiaphas, and they conspired to arrest Jesus in a treacherous way and kill him. “Not during the festival,” they said, “so there won’t be rioting among the people.”

THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY

While Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, a woman approached him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume. She poured it on his head as he was reclining at the table. When the disciples saw it, they were indignant. “Why this waste?” they asked. “This might have been sold for a great deal and given to the poor.” Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a noble thing for me. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me. By pouring this perfume on my body, she has prepared me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.” Then one of the Twelve, the man called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” So they weighed out thirty pieces of silver for him. And from that time he started looking for a good opportunity to betray him.

MATTHEW 26:1-16

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: Why did the woman pour her valuable perfume on Jesus? Would you have been willing to offer a valuable gift like this to Jesus?

OLDER CHILD: The woman in this story loved Jesus very much and wanted to demonstrate her love in a real way by pouring her perfume on Jesus. What are ways that you can demonstrate your love for Jesus?

TEENAGER: The woman understood the value of Jesus more than Caiaphas, the disciples and especially more than Judas. What things in your life do you tend to place more value in than you do Christ?

Prayer Prompt:

Ask the Lord to give you and your family a heart of surrender toward your material possessions.

Activity:

EASTER SUNDAY INVITATION

Easter is typically a time when people think about attending church. Encourage your family to invite everyone they see throughout the coming days to attend church with your family on Easter Sunday. Each night at bedtime, intentionally pray for those you and your family have invited to come to church with you.

DAY 4

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

BETRAYAL AT THE PASSOVER

On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" "Go into the city to a certain man," he said, "and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My time is near; I am celebrating the Passover at your place with my disciples.'" So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. When evening came, he was reclining at the table with the Twelve. While they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me." Deeply distressed, each one began to say to him, "Surely not I, Lord?" He replied, "The one who dipped his hand with me in the bowl — he will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had not been born." Judas, his betrayer, replied, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" "You have said it," he told him.

THE FIRST LORD'S SUPPER

As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take and eat it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them and said, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. But I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

PETER'S DENIAL PREDICTED

Then Jesus said to them, "Tonight all of you will fall away because of me, for it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

Peter told him, “Even if everyone falls away because of you, I will never fall away.” “Truly I tell you,” Jesus said to him, “tonight, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” “Even if I have to die with you,” Peter told him, “I will never deny you,” and all the disciples said the same thing.

MATTHEW 26:17-35

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: We remember what Jesus did during the Passover celebration when we take part in the Lord’s Supper at our church. The bread and the juice help us remember that Jesus’s body would die (body/bread) and that while on the cross, He would be hurt and would bleed (blood/juice). Why do you think Jesus was willing to die on the cross?

OLDER CHILD: The sin (disobedience and wanting our way instead of God’s way) of Judas’ betrayal was one of many sins that led to Jesus’ death on the cross. During the Passover, Jesus tells His disciples that the juice represents His blood which “will be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” What sins did Judas commit that led to Jesus’ death on the cross? What sins do we commit that require Jesus’ forgiveness? How can we receive Jesus’ forgiveness?

TEENAGER: Jesus knew about Judas’ betrayal, Peter’s denial and the other disciples’ sin before they committed them. How should that help us when we face temptation? What could they have done instead? What do you think the consequences would have been?

Prayer Prompt:

Lead your family in a time of asking the Lord for strength and wisdom when faced with temptations.

Activity:

FOOT WASHING

Read John 13:4-5. Just before bedtime, wrap a towel around your waist, as Jesus did, and wash your family’s feet. Help your family see the need to serve one another.

DAY 5

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

THE PRAYER IN THE GARDEN

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he told the disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." Taking along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. He said to them, "I am deeply grieved to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake with me." Going a little farther, he fell face down and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. He asked Peter, "So, couldn't you stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray, so that you won't enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again, a second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." And he came again and found them sleeping, because they could not keep their eyes open. After leaving them, he went away again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? See, the time is near. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up; let's go. See, my betrayer is near."

MATTHEW 26:36-46

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: Jesus took His friends to a special garden to pray. What do you think made this place a good place to pray? Do you have a special place where you like to pray? Do we need to make a special place to pray in our home?

OLDER CHILD: In the garden, Jesus prayed two different times that He would not have to “drink the cup of suffering” by dying on the cross. God chose to answer Jesus’ prayer by saying “no” and not protecting Him from the cross. Have any of your prayers been answered in ways that you did not want them to be answered? Is it sometimes difficult to trust God when He answers your prayer by saying “no” or “wait?”

TEENAGER: In the garden, Jesus prayed two different times that He would not have to “drink the cup of suffering” He was about to face on the cross. God heard Jesus’ prayer but answered “no.” How do you stay strong when you pray and do not get the answer you want? What do we know about God that can help us when it is difficult to trust Him?

Prayer Prompt:

Thank the Lord today for the gift of prayer and the confidence we have in knowing He always answers in ways that are for our good.

Activity:

PRAYER REMINDER

Create a prayer reminder for your family. It could be a tack board, prayer notebook or journal, or a container for collecting written prayers or prayer requests. Have each family member add their prayers to your prayer reminder and pray for them together as a family.

DAY 6

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

JUDAS' BETRAYAL OF JESUS

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, suddenly arrived. A large mob with swords and clubs was with him from the chief priests and elders of the people. His betrayer had given them a sign: "The one I kiss, he's the one; arrest him." So immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. "Friend," Jesus asked him, "why have you come?" Then they came up, took hold of Jesus, and arrested him. At that moment one of those with Jesus reached out his hand and drew his sword. He struck the high priest's servant and cut off his ear. Then Jesus told him, "Put your sword back in its place because all who take up the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot call on my Father, and he will provide me here and now with more than twelve legions of angels? How, then, would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?" At that time Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs, as if I were a criminal, to capture me? Every day I used to sit, teaching in the temple, and you didn't arrest me. But all this has happened so that the writings of the prophets would be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and ran away.

MATTHEW 26:47-56

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: What was the sign from Judas that let the soldiers know whom they should arrest? What did Jesus call Judas in this story? How do you think Jesus was able to call Judas “friend?” Could you call someone your friend if he or she had you arrested?

OLDER CHILD: What did one of Jesus’ followers do to one of the soldiers? Who healed the soldier’s ear? What does that tell you about the character of Jesus, who He is and how He treats others?

TEENAGER: Jesus rebuked His disciple for cutting off the soldier’s ear. Sometimes God allows His followers to face trouble, adversity and opposition. When we fight against these challenges, we may be opposing God’s will for our lives. Is it hard for you to accept facing challenges in your own life? What advice would you give to a new believer about facing challenges?

Prayer Prompt:

As a family, thank the Lord for how He has fulfilled His Word and how we can trust Him to accomplish His plan for the future.

Activity:

PRAYER TOUR

Load your family into your car and as you “go down the road” pray for your city. Pray for the homeless, hospital staff, firefighters, police officers, rescue missions, pregnancy care centers, schools and churches.

DAY 7

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

JESUS FACES THE SANHEDRIN

Those who had arrested Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest where the scribes and the elders had convened. Peter was following him at a distance right to the high priest's courtyard. He went in and was sitting with the servants to see the outcome. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they could not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. Finally, two who came forward stated, "This man said, 'I can destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'" The high priest stood up and said to him, "Don't you have an answer to what these men are testifying against you?" But Jesus kept silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God." "You have said it," Jesus told him. "But I tell you, in the future you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? See, now you've heard the blasphemy. What is your decision?" They answered, "He deserves death!" Then they spat in his face and beat him; others slapped him and said, "Prophecy to us, Messiah! Who was it that hit you?"

MATTHEW 26:57-68

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: The people who had Jesus arrested were very angry with Him. What things did they do to hurt Jesus? What did Jesus do during this time? Why do you think Jesus remained quiet?

OLDER CHILD: What do you think of Jesus' response to the high priest? What was Jesus telling those who questioned Him by His silence? Why did Jesus not defend Himself?

TEENAGER: While Jesus was in a difficult situation during the trial, He referred to His second coming (Daniel 7:13), which points to the greater hope that all followers of Christ share. Why does the promise of the second coming give us hope when we are struggling in a difficult situation?

Prayer Prompt:

Lead your family in thanking the Lord that we know one day Jesus will return.

Activity:

WATCH A MOVIE

Rent or purchase a movie based on the biblical story of Easter. Discuss how the movie helps your family better focus on Jesus death, burial and resurrection, and why this is important to your family.

DAY 8

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

PETER DENIES HIS LORD

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl approached him and said, "You were with Jesus the Galilean too." But he denied it in front of everyone: "I don't know what you're talking about." When he had gone out to the gateway, another woman saw him and told those who were there, "This man was with Jesus the Nazarene!" And again he denied it with an oath: "I don't know the man!" After a little while those standing there approached and said to Peter, "You really are one of them, since even your accent gives you away." Then he started to curse and to swear with an oath, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed, and Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

MATTHEW 26:69-75

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: Jesus told Peter that he would tell people three times, “I don’t know Jesus.” Did Jesus’ words to Peter come true? Is everything that Jesus says true? What is one true thing that Jesus teaches that you like to think about?

OLDER CHILD: Jesus told Peter that he would tell people three times, “I don’t know Jesus.” Did what Jesus say to Peter come true? How did Peter react when Jesus’ words came true? How do you feel when you know you have done something wrong and disappointed God? Why do you think God created this feeling?

TEENAGER: Peter sinned three times by saying he did not know Jesus. After he had denied Jesus the third time, the Bible says he remembered the words Jesus had spoken, and he went outside and wept bitterly. Peter was broken over his sin. Does your sin against God bring out the same emotions in you?

Prayer Prompt:

Lead your family in thanking God that when we sin, we can know that He will forgive us of our sins (1 John 1:9).

Activity:

PRAY FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONARIES

Go to the North American Mission Board’s website at prayforplanters.com. Watch the video that asks for prayer for North American church planters, then choose a group from the links included on the page for whom your family will pray. Church planters share the good news of Jesus as they start churches.

DAY 9

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

JESUS HANDED OVER TO PILATE

When daybreak came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put him to death. After tying him up, they led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.

Then Judas, his betrayer, seeing that Jesus had been condemned, was full of remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood," he said. "What's that to us?" they said. "See to it yourself!" So he threw the silver into the temple and departed.

MATTHEW 27:1-5a

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: In the story, Judas knew he had made a terrible mistake. Have you ever felt sorry for doing something wrong? What is the right thing to do when you have made a mistake? (Mom and dad: Give an example of a time you have done something wrong and how you did the right thing.)

OLDER CHILD: In the passage, Judas knew he had made a terrible mistake and sinned against Jesus. Have you ever felt sorry for sin you have committed? Sometimes it is difficult to admit our sin to others. What is the right thing to do when you have sinned? (Mom and dad: Give an example of a time you have done something wrong and how you did the right thing.)

TEENAGER: In the passage, Judas knew he had sinned against Jesus, an innocent man. He regretted his actions. Have you ever had any regrets for your actions? What did you do about it?

Prayer Prompt:

Thank the Lord that as His follower, the Bible teaches us that there is no sin He will not forgive.

Activity:

FAMILY MUSIC TIME

Listen to several Christian songs that describe sin, grace and forgiveness. What is one lyric that is meaningful to you that describes our need for forgiveness and what it means to be forgiven of our sin?

DAY 10

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

JESUS FACES THE GOVERNOR

Now Jesus stood before the governor. “Are you the King of the Jews?” the governor asked him. Jesus answered, “You say so.” While he was being accused by the chief priests and elders, he didn’t answer. Then Pilate said to him, “Don’t you hear how much they are testifying against you?” But he didn’t answer him on even one charge, so that the governor was quite amazed.

JESUS OR BARABBAS

At the festival the governor’s custom was to release to the crowd a prisoner they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, “Who is it you want me to release for you – Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” For he knew it was because of envy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judge’s bench, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for today I’ve suffered terribly in a dream because of him.” The chief priests and the elders, however, persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to execute Jesus. The governor asked them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” “Barabbas!” they answered. Pilate asked them, “What should I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ?” They all answered, “Crucify him!” Then he said, “Why? What has he done wrong?” But they kept shouting all the more, “Crucify him!” When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that a riot was starting instead, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. See to it yourselves!” All the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” Then he released Barabbas to them and, after having Jesus flogged, handed him over to be crucified.

MATTHEW 27:11-26

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: Pilate asked the crowd to choose between Jesus and the criminal, Barabbas, to be set free. The people in the crowd chose Barabbas, leaving Jesus alone to face the punishment of the cross. Have you ever felt alone? What can you do when you see other people being left out or feeling alone?

OLDER CHILD: In the passage, the crowd kept shouting for Jesus to be crucified. It seems that everyone was against Jesus. What would you have done that day if you were standing in the crowd?

TEENAGER: Pilate is the one man who could have set Jesus free, but for many reasons, he was afraid of the crowd and did nothing to help Him. Has there been a time when you could have helped someone, but you were afraid of what other people would think or do? If so, explain what you could have done instead.

Prayer Prompt:

Thank the Lord that as His disciples we have confidence in knowing that we are never alone (Hebrews 13:5b).

Activity:

PRAY FOR YOUR PASTOR

Easter is a busy time of the year for your pastor. Pray for his balance of time as he carries out his responsibilities for the church and his responsibilities for his family. Pray his Easter Sunday message is clear and Christ-centered. Create a card or note of encouragement for your pastor.

DAY 11

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

MOCKED BY THE MILITARY

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's residence and gathered the whole company around him. They stripped him and dressed him in a scarlet robe. They twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and placed a staff in his right hand. And they knelt down before him and mocked him: "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spat on him, took the staff, and kept hitting him on the head. After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him.

MATTHEW 27:27-31

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: In the verses we just read, the Roman soldiers treated Jesus badly and hurt Him. They were bullies. Have you ever been bullied? Have you ever been a bully?

OLDER CHILD: In the verses we just read, Jesus was treated very badly. List all the bad things the Roman soldiers did to mistreat Jesus. Have you ever been bullied? Have you ever been a bully? What can we learn from this story about bullying?

TEENAGER: When it came time for the crucifixion, the Roman soldiers made fun of Jesus and humiliated Him. In spite of all that happened to Him, Jesus never fought back. How would you explain to a nonbeliever why Jesus never defended Himself?

Prayer Prompt:

Jesus knows what it is like to be mistreated. Lead each family member to ask the Lord to show them ways to show love, grace and mercy to people who have hurt them.

Activity:

PRAY FOR INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARIES

Many missionaries around the world face danger every day. Visit www.imb.org/pray and choose a people group where mission work could be considered dangerous. Find the country on a map and post it where you will be reminded in the coming weeks to pray for the missionaries who serve in this country.

DAY 12

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

CRUCIFIED BETWEEN TWO CRIMINALS

As they were going out, they found a Cyrenaic man named Simon. They forced him to carry his cross. When they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull), they gave him wine mixed with gall to drink. But when he tasted it, he refused to drink it. After crucifying him, they divided his clothes by casting lots. Then they sat down and were guarding him there. Above his head they put up the charge against him in writing: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then two criminals were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. Those who passed by were yelling insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!” In the same way the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him and said, “He saved others, but he cannot save himself! He is the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God rescue him now – if he takes pleasure in him! For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” In the same way even the criminals who were crucified with him taunted him.

MATTHEW 27:32-44

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: In this part of the story, Jesus had not had any sleep and the Roman soldiers had beaten Him badly. He was tired, weak and hurt. Who did the soldiers force to help Jesus by carrying His cross? What would you have done or said if you were chosen by the Roman soldier and ordered to carry Jesus' cross?

OLDER CHILD: In the passage, Jesus was tired, weak and hurt. What would you have done or said if you were chosen by the Roman soldier and ordered to carry Jesus' cross? Describe the different ways Jesus was mocked in this passage? What stands out the most to you? Why?

TEENAGER: How would you have felt if you were the one the Roman soldier ordered to carry Jesus' cross? Describe the different ways Jesus was mocked in this passage? What stands out the most? Why?

Prayer Prompt:

Jesus paid the ultimate price. Lead each member of your family in thanking Jesus for how He went to the cross in their place.

Activity:

CREATE A SIGN

The soldiers added a sign to Jesus' cross that read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews". Create a sign that tells the world who Jesus is to you and your family.

DAY 13

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

THE DEATH OF JESUS

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over the whole land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling for Elijah.” Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and offered him a drink. But the rest said, “Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.” But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit. Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, and the rocks were split. The tombs were also opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And they came out of the tombs after his resurrection, entered the holy city, and appeared to many. When the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” Many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and looked after him were there, watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

MATTHEW 27:45-56

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: In the Scripture today, we read how God demonstrated His awesome power. What are some of those ways? What are some of the ways that God is powerful in your life and the life of your family?

OLDER CHILD: In the passage, we can see God's power demonstrated in many ways. List the things in this story that only God can do. What are some things that God does in your life that only He can do?

TEENAGER: Just after Jesus' death the Bible says, "Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom." Why is this an important detail?

Prayer Prompt:

As a family, describe the many ways the Lord shows His power in your family each day and give Him praise.

Activity:

CREATE RESURRECTION EGGS

Purchase or create a set of Resurrection Eggs. Open each egg and review the story of Easter to this point. Do not open the eggs that symbolizes the resurrection until Day 15.

NCBAPTIST.ORG/RESURRECTIONEGGS

DAY 14

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

When it was evening, a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph came, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. He approached Pilate and asked for Jesus's body. Then Pilate ordered that it be released. So Joseph took the body, wrapped it in clean, fine linen, and placed it in his new tomb, which he had cut into the rock. He left after rolling a great stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were seated there, facing the tomb.

THE CLOSELY GUARDED TOMB

The next day, which followed the preparation day, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember that while this deceiver was still alive he said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give orders that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come, steal him, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first." "You have a guard of soldiers," Pilate told them. "Go and make it as secure as you know how." They went and secured the tomb by setting a seal on the stone and placing the guard.

MATTHEW 27:57-66

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: In the passage, a man named Joseph asked for permission to take Jesus' body, prepare Him for burial and place Him in a tomb that Joseph owned. This took time and money to pay for the materials Joseph used. What are ways we, as a family, can use our time and money to help others?

OLDER CHILD: In the passage, a man named Joseph asked for permission to take Jesus' body and prepare Him for burial and place Him in a tomb. This action took time and money to pay for the materials Joseph used. What are ways we, as a family, can use our time and money to help others?

TEENAGER: Matthew 27 has some of the darkest words in the entire Bible. Describe a time when you felt you were in spiritual darkness and felt hopeless. How did Christ bring light into that moment?

Prayer Prompt:

Ask the Lord to give you and your family an opportunity to use your time and money to help someone in need this weekend.

Activity:

SPECIAL MEAL

Plan to cook a special meal together as a family. Purchase croissant dough and roll a vegetable or cooked meat into each to symbolize the burial of Jesus. Use some of the dough to create balls to close up the croissant dough symbolizing the stone that sealed the tomb. Use the time preparing this meal to explain Jesus' burial and how the tomb was sealed for three days.

DAY 15

As you sit at home, meal time or bedtime reading

RESURRECTION MORNING

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they became like dead men. The angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there.' Listen, I have told you." So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell his disciples the news. Just then Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" They came up, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus told them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there."

MATTHEW 28:1-10

Discussion Questions:

YOUNGER CHILD: Open the remaining Resurrection Egg and ask your child to describe what is in the egg (it is empty). In the passage, the angel told the two women, Mary Magdalene and Mary, that Jesus had risen and was no longer in the tomb. Why did the angel tell the women to “go quickly and tell his disciples...?” Who are some of the people you need to go and tell about the risen Jesus?

OLDER CHILD: Open the remaining Resurrection Egg and ask your child to describe what is in the egg (it is empty). In the passage, the angel told the two women, Mary Magdalene and Mary, that Jesus had risen and was no longer in the tomb. Why did the angel tell the women to “go quickly and tell his disciples...?” Who are some friends you need to go and tell about the risen Jesus?

TEENAGER: Put yourself in Mary and Mary Magdalene’s’ place. What do you think it was like for them to discover the stone moved out of the way and the tomb empty? Spend some time talking about how Jesus transforms people’s lives and how He wants to transform our lives today.

Prayer Prompt:

Ask the Lord to give each family member an opportunity to share the story of Jesus’ life, death, burial and resurrection with someone they know this week.

Activity:

GOSPEL CONVERSATION JOURNAL

Create a family journal that can be used to continually pray for those who do not know Jesus’ life, death, burial and resurrection story. List each person by name, pray for them and plan to have a gospel conversation with them. Talk about sharing Christ as a family and document opportunities your family has to share Christ in your family journal.

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