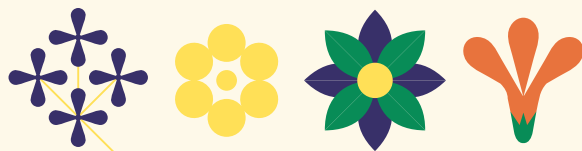




PREPARING FOR

EASTER

FAMILY ACTIVITIES FOR HOLY WEEK & MORE



stonebriar community church



Why Prepare for Easter?

The two biggest events on the Christian calendar are Christmas and Easter. It is troubling that many of us put far less emphasis on Easter. While we are busy months in advance planning for Christmas, Easter seems to creep up on us, and with very little planning and focus, it can easily slide right past. But Easter should be a BIG deal in our homes! Easter is the day we celebrate the empty tomb and Jesus' victory over death!

So in the weeks leading up to Easter, you're invited to take time with your family to read God's Word, think about the Easter story, and prepare your hearts for this celebration together.

How to Use This Family Resource

This guidebook includes readings, discussion questions, and hands-on activities that will help your whole family experience and understand the story of Easter. There are five main sections in this book:

1. An overview of Holy Week (the week leading up to Easter, April 10–17)
2. A Scripture reading plan with activities to guide your whole family through the Easter story
3. Activities designed for families with younger children (10 & under)
4. Activities designed for families with preteens and teens (11 & up)
5. A list of additional resources for you to explore to build your own family traditions

We encourage you to look through all the resources in this book, choose those that resonate with you, and make a game plan for which ones you'd like to incorporate into your family's rhythms leading up to Easter.

You don't have to do something every day or feel pressured to fit in every activity—just select a few things that will add meaning to your family's time together during this season. And remember to have fun!

The Goal: Focus on the Basic Truths

As you do these readings and activities with your family, we encourage you to focus on the big picture while you teach your children about Jesus' death and resurrection. It's important to emphasize how important Christ's death on the cross was—sharing that Jesus took the sins of the world (including our children's sins) on His back to the grave—and to also celebrate the miracle of Jesus' glorious resurrection and all that it means for believers.

These are the basic truths to focus on with your family this Easter season:

- God loves you.
- Everyone sins, but our sins are forgiven in Jesus.
- Death is not the end of the story but the start of the story.
- All believers have hope for a future with Christ because of His resurrection.
- When you believe in Jesus, you can live forever with God and Jesus in Heaven!



Section 1: Celebrating Holy Week

The week leading up to Easter Sunday—called Holy Week, which takes place this year on April 10–17—is an extra special opportunity to make the most of the Easter season. The key days during Holy Week are Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Resurrection Sunday.



If you would like to observe Holy Week as a family, try having a special family meal on these days, allowing room for conversation, prayer, and contemplation.

Here is an overview of the significance of each day during Holy Week, to guide your family's time together:

- **Palm Sunday—He Came to Save (Sunday, April 10)**
 - Focus: Celebrating Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, where He would soon die on the cross and be resurrected from the dead to save us from our sins
 - Key Verse: "Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you." Zechariah 9:9 (NLT)
 - Additional Reading: John 12:12–16
- **Maundy Thursday—He Showed Us Love (Thursday, April 14)**
 - Focus: Jesus' last meal with His disciples prior to His arrest, where He showed them love by washing their feet and told them to love as He loved
 - Key Verse: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13:34 (NIV)
 - Additional Reading: John 13:1–35
- **Good Friday—He Paid the Price (Friday, April 15)**
 - Focus: The price Jesus paid for our sins by sacrificing His life on the cross
 - Key Verse: "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." John 15:13 (NLT)
 - Additional Reading: John 18 & 19
- **Resurrection Sunday—He Is Risen (Sunday, April 17)**
 - Focus: Jesus' miraculous resurrection from the dead, defeating sin, death, and the devil and securing eternal life for all believers—this is the ultimate day of celebration!
 - Key Verse: "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as He said would happen." Matthew 28:5b–6a (NLT)
 - Additional Reading: Matthew 28

You may also consider adding the following observance to your week:

- **Day of Darkness (Saturday, April 16)**
 - Turn out the lights at home on Good Friday evening and leave them off until Easter morning. Take this opportunity to talk about how the greatest Light in the world was



temporarily extinguished and how dark it would have been if that were the end of the story.

- Reflection Verses: Mark 15:33, Isaiah 53:5, John 8:12

One cannot speak of Easter without speaking about the miracle of Jesus Christ's resurrection. Each of the four Gospels report different, exciting details about Jesus' resurrection, so as you feel led, spend time reading the details presented in each of the Gospel accounts:

- Matthew 28:1–10
- Mark 16:1–8
- Luke 24:1–12
- John 20:1–18

As part of your reflection and celebration during Holy Week, we also invite you to participate in our worship services and special programming here at Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, Texas or online. You can find all the details at stonebriar.org/Easter.

Section 2: The Easter Story

A Bible-Reading Journey for the Whole Family

The following resource includes Scripture readings, activities, and discussion questions to guide your family through the story of Easter. Feel free to use this at any time leading up to Easter, or consider following through the plan on April 8–18 (beginning the Friday before Palm Sunday and ending the day after Easter).



Day 1: Jesus enters Jerusalem.

Read Mark 11:1–11

Activity: Take a walk outside as a family. For those with younger children, have a parade through the house or in the backyard. Make palm leaves from construction paper and wave them and cheer as family members pass by.

Discuss: Think about how excited you would be to see Jesus enter your town. How can you welcome Him into your life?



Day 2: Jesus washes His friends' feet.

Read John 13:3–9, 14–15

Activity: Wash your child's feet—in a tub, a sink, or just with wet cloths. Allow your child to wash your feet as well.

Discuss: How did you feel when you washed my feet? How does it make you feel that Jesus would wash our dirty feet? Why do you think Jesus wants us to do this?



Day 3: Jesus shares The Last Supper with His friends.

Read Mark 14:22–24

Activity: Share the elements of bread and juice.

Discuss: How do you feel when you read Jesus' words about the sacrifice of His body and blood? If He was willing to make such a sacrifice, how do you think He reacts to our struggle with sin? Jesus wants to rescue us from our sin—to forgive us and to help us change.

**Day 4: Jesus prays in the garden.**

Read Mark 14:32–42

Activity: Pray as a family, asking God for His will to be done in your lives

Discuss: Think about the sin and struggles in your life. Because of the sin in our lives, Jesus had to suffer and take the sin of the world on Him. Do you think that's fair? But because Jesus loves us so much, that's what He chose to do!

**Day 5: Jesus is arrested.**

Read Mark 14:43–50

Activity: Make paper handcuffs, put them on, then break them to show how Jesus frees us from sin.

Discuss: Why did Peter slice off the man's ear? What would you have done if someone came to arrest your best friend? Even though Jesus could have stopped them from arresting Him, He didn't. Why not?

**Day 6: Jesus stands trial.**

Read Mark 14:53–64

Activity: Write down some things you know you have done wrong today on a sheet of paper. Now crumple it up and throw it in the trash. That is how our sins are forgiven because Jesus died for us.

Discuss: Do you think Jesus was afraid to die? Can you think of a reason why the leaders would hate Jesus so much?

**Day 7: Jesus is crucified.**

Read Mark 15:25–34

Activity: Make a cross with recycled or found objects around your home. For younger kids, cut out a cross from cardboard and place it on a sheet of colored construction paper. Set it in a sunny place for several hours. See what happens to the paper underneath.

Discuss: Do you know why Jesus stayed on that cross? Was it love? Who does Jesus love?

**Day 8: Jesus dies and is buried.**

Read Mark 15:37–46

Activity: Burn a candle and reflect upon the hope Jesus brought into the world. For those with younger children, turn on a flashlight and say a prayer thanking Jesus for bringing light in to the world. Turn off the flashlight and thank Jesus for dying for our sins.

Discuss: How do you think Jesus' friends felt as they buried His body in the tomb? How would you feel if your best friend died?

**Day 9: Jesus' body is gone.**

Read Mark 16:1–8

Activity: Paint a rock with an encouraging word or message and give your "good news" as a gift to someone who is struggling.

Discuss: How would you feel if you saw a huge, shiny angel? What did you think of the angel's news? Do you think you would have believed Him if you had been one of those women?



**Day 10: Jesus talks to Mary.**

Read John 20:11–18

Activity: Talk to God as a family through prayer.

Discuss: Do you know anyone who has died that you will see one day in Heaven? How do you think you will feel when you see that person?

**Day 11: Jesus appears to His friends.**

Read Luke 24:36–43

Activity: For younger children, put together a simple first aid kit: bandaids, cotton balls, etc., and put in a baggie. How are we healed by believing Jesus died for our sins?

Discuss: The Bible tells us that Jesus' body was not only real, it was better than real—it could never get sick or hurt or die ever again. The great news is that someday Jesus will give us bodies just like that too! How do you feel about that? Let's thank God for His amazing rescue plan!

Share: Have each member of your family write down the name of a person to share the story of Jesus with. Put the names up on your fridge or somewhere you will see them often, so you can pray regularly for them and be reminded to share the story of Jesus with them as the Lord leads.

Section 3: For the Little Ones

Activities for Families with Younger Children (10 & Under)

Easter Story For Littles

Telling the Easter story can be confusing and even a little scary for our little ones. After all, we tend to use lots of words they are not familiar with, and we talk a lot about death. Here are a few tips to help you teach your young children the Easter story:

- Tell the crucifixion story in a way that does not create fear. Avoid emphasizing the brutality of Jesus' death. Read the Scripture passage in Mark 15, explaining a realistic portrayal of Jesus' death and resurrection.
- Talk to your child in warm and reassuring tones.
- If you are able, share the Easter story several times over the week leading up to Easter. The more familiar your children are with the story, the less scary it will seem.
- **Focus on the good news: Jesus is alive!** Our littles need to know that Jesus' death is not the end of the story. He rose from the dead and is alive. The resurrection accounts in Matthew 28 and John 20 are great to share with little ones.

Family Activities

- **Science Experiment**
Place a white carnation in a vase with water. Add a dozen drops of red food coloring to the water. Wait! The carnation will gradually take on the color of the dye. Read 1 Peter 1:18–19 and discuss how Jesus took our sins upon himself when He dies on the cross.
- **Something Sweet**
Put a marshmallow Peep on a microwave-safe plate and place it in the microwave. Heat it up for one minute (or less). Observe how the Peep grows. Read 2 Peter 3:18 and talk about growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.



- **Palm Sunday**
Trace your child's hands on green paper several times. Cut out the handprints, and tape three to four hands to a long stick. Wave the "palm branches" around and read John 12:12–13.
- **The Garden Prayer**
At sunset, take your family to a visit a garden, park, or the prayer garden at Stonebriar Community Church (near the portables). Read Luke 22:39–46, and discuss how we can talk to the Lord about anything in prayer.
- **Saturday Before Easter**
Drop an Easter lily on the doorstep of someone special, especially someone going through a rough time, with a note that says, "Joy comes in the morning . . ." –Psalm 30:5.

Make Your Own Resurrection Eggs

Preparation: You will need 12 plastic eggs. With a magic marker, give each egg a number (1–12). Fill the eggs with the corresponding trinket and Scripture verses (see list of eggs below). Hide the eggs throughout your living room or somewhere in the house. You can hide all twelve in one night or one per day for 12 days.

Activity: Have the children search the room for the eggs. When the eggs have been found, bring them back to the middle of the room and take turns opening the eggs (in numerical order), showing each trinket and reading the Scripture verse.

Egg 1: A leaf or paper cut out of a palm branch

John 12:14

Discuss:

1. Why were people shouting Hosanna and waving palm branches as Jesus was entering Jerusalem?
2. Why would they call Jesus King of the Jews?

Egg 2: Strip of cloth

John 13:1–17

Discuss:

1. Why would a person need to have their feet washed before dinner?
2. Why did Jesus wash the disciples' feet? What was the lesson He wanted them to learn?

Egg 3: Crackers

Luke 22:19

Discuss:

1. What was the occasion on the Jewish calendar that Jesus and His disciples were gathered to celebrate?
2. What were the instructions Jesus gave to His disciples at this special meal?

Egg 4: Three dimes (representing 30 pieces of silver)

Matthew 26:14–15

Discuss:

1. Why would Judas be willing to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver?



Egg 5: Twine with knots in it

Matthew 27:1–2 & John 19:16

Discuss:

1. Who was Pontius Pilate?
2. What did the Chief Priests want Pilate to do with Jesus?
3. What did Pilate ultimately tell the Chief Priests they could do with Jesus?

Egg 6: Square of red fabric

Matthew 27:27–30

Discuss:

1. Why would Jesus' captors put a scarlet robe on Him and mock Him?
2. Why did they use a crown of thorns?

Egg 7: Small cross (cut one out of construction paper if needed)

Acts 2:23–24

Discuss:

1. Why do we use the symbol of an empty cross when we talk about Easter?

Egg 8: Vinegar “sponge” (cotton ball with vinegar)

John 19:28–29

Discuss:

1. Smell or taste the vinegar—how would you describe it?

Egg 9: A tiny bag of crushed rocks

Matthew 27:50–54

Discuss:

1. What were the last words Jesus said before He died on the cross?
2. What happened when Jesus died?
3. If you saw this, how would you feel?

Egg 10: Strip of white cloth

Matthew 27:58

Discuss:

1. Why would a body be wrapped in linen cloths?

Egg 11: A stone

Matthew 27:65

Discuss:

1. Why was it important to roll the stone in front of Jesus' tomb?
2. Could a stone—even a really big stone—keep Jesus in the tomb?

Egg 12: An empty egg

Mark 16:5–6

Discuss:

1. Why is it important that the tomb was empty?
2. Even though Jesus had told them He would overcome death, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James were afraid at the tomb. Why do you think that is?

***There are many versions of Resurrection Eggs available online, and some include free printable notes you can use in each egg. Feel free to mix and match to keep the concept fresh each year.*



Holy Week Eggs

You can also make or purchase a set of Holy Week eggs depicting the events leading up to Jesus' resurrection. Following a similar hide and seek activity, you can encourage your family to read and discuss the image for each day of Holy Week.

This Holy Week egg set from Etsy, for example, is hand-painted with images of the Holy Week events and verses on the back.



SECTION 4: For the Big Kids

Activities for Families with Preteens & Teens (11 & Up)

Easter Story For Preteens & Teens

Teaching the Easter story to teenagers can be a bit of a challenge. Most church curriculum and resources are usually built for younger children and involve a lot of kid-friendly activities that may not interest older children. This Easter season, we want to help our preteens and teens rediscover the Easter story and tie together all the events that led up to Holy Week. Although your child may have heard the story of the crucifixion and resurrection 100 times, they may not have caught every detail or understood all of its meaning.

Our teens are growing up in a secular culture, no matter how hard we try to shelter them from it. Here's a quote that might help frame how secular culture sees truth versus how we see it as Christians:

"But what secularism says is that religion doesn't deal with truth; religion deals with faith. Religion doesn't deal with reason; religion deals with feelings. And it separates these two things as if Christian truth claims aren't truth claims at all, but that religion is not only personal, it's private. If there's one punchline I want you to get out of today, and as we walk through the events of Holy Week, it's this—Christianity, and the truth claims that Christianity makes about life in the world, are personal, but they're not private. The truth claims of Christianity are public truth claims, just like gravity is, the sun is, the solar system is. Christianity says Jesus rose from the dead. And it's not something that's true for you and not for me, or true if you believe it. What Christianity claims and what it sets its feet on, is that this Jesus—what happened to Him—is just flat-out true." John Stonestreet, president of the Chuck Colson Center for Christian Worldview

Teaching lessons from the Bible to teens can be hard. They may no longer need craft projects with eggs and cotton balls, but they do need the lessons of Scripture and something fun to break it all down and help them remember the truth, test their understanding, and articulate their questions.



Family Activities

1. **Go deep.** If your teen has questions about Easter, don't ignore them. Encourage them to write down a list of the questions that matter most and agree to explore the answers together. A great resource for your conversation is *The Case for Christ: Youth Edition* by Lee Strobel.

2. **What's in the basket?** Much like with the resurrection eggs described for your younger kids, you can do an activity with your older kids to help illustrate the Holy Week story. Fill a basket of any kind with household items or trinkets from the dollar store that can tie into the events of Holy Week (see below for ideas). Have your child take each item out of the basket and describe how it might fit into the Holy Week story. Then finish by reading one of the Gospel accounts of the resurrection together: Matthew 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–18

*Basket-Filler Ideas from Christine Clark, Ministry Leader of Family Ministries

1. palm branches—Palm Sunday and Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem
2. red wine vinegar or juice and pita bread—the Passover meal/the Last Supper
3. wash rag—Jesus washing the feet of the disciples
4. seed packet—Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane
5. rope—Jesus betrayed by Judas and arrested
6. screen cleaner kit—the first round of trials found Jesus to have a clean record (innocent)
7. sunglasses—Jesus kept his cool; He spent many of the trials just standing in silence, only spoke when called upon, and even then spoke only words of truth
8. knee support for gardening—symbolizing Jesus dragging the cross and falling along the way
9. a rubber chicken—Peter denied Jesus three times, just as Jesus said he would, before the rooster crowed
10. dice—the centurions played games and cast lots for Jesus' possessions, making a mockery of Him
11. cross—Jesus' sacrificial death for the sins of the world
12. travel pack of toiletries (body wash, lotion, body spray)—Jesus' friends came and took care of His body and put Him in a borrowed tomb
13. rock—a large stone was put in front of the tomb to seal it, and a centurion was assigned to guard it (just in case His disciples came to take His body away)
14. empty golden egg—our story is not over, because He is Risen!

**list is adapted from the blog Big Pitt Stop*

Additional Resources

The following resources may be meaningful for your family to watch, read, or interact with during the Easter season, or any time throughout the year. Remember, you don't have to squeeze in every activity—simply choose what resonates with you as your family looks to Christ together.

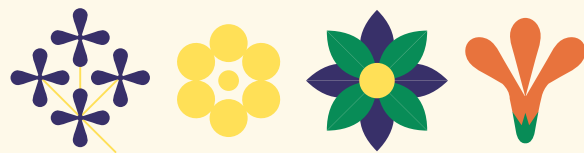
The Chosen by Angel Studios—the first ever multi-season series about the life of Christ

On Calvary's Hill: 40 Readings for the Easter Season by Max Lucado

God Gave Us Easter (part of the God Gave Us series) by Lisa Tawn Bergren

The Bible App for Kids—app for kids that allows them to interact with Bible stories





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