

Come Alive

A 30-DAY DEVOTIONAL JOURNEY
OF HOPE AND RENEWAL



Come Alive: A 30-Day Devotional Journey of Hope and Renewal
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INTRODUCTION

More than two thousand years ago, God's plan of redemption altered the world forever. The power of sin and death was broken through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ that first Easter. Death was defeated. True life, spiritual life, God's life triumphed. And today we continue to come alive to God's story of love as our lives and our world are transformed by His grace.

That is reason to celebrate. It is reason to respond to God's open arms and His invitation to draw near to Him. This book is a devotional journey through the events of Holy Week and beyond. The lessons, Scripture, and reflection or small-group questions are all here to guide you through a life-giving experience of the truth of Easter and of God's power to transform you into a new creation. You can use these short daily readings and questions on your own or in a group setting. Follow them flexibly to fit your schedule and needs. Most important, let them draw you into an encounter with God and His invitation to come alive in the truest sense possible.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

There are so many fun ways to celebrate the Easter season and create meaningful experiences with friends, family, classes, and small groups. Here are some activity ideas to ignite your creativity throughout Holy Week and beyond. The tangible examples may be especially valuable for helping children grasp the powerful truth expressed in Easter. But we all can use a fresh reminder or hands-on encounter of God at work in our world. Enjoy the chance to be creative and come alive to God's truth in a new way.

PASSOVER

Host a traditional Passover meal. Set up cushions on the floor, and have someone wash the feet of guests as they arrive. You may choose to research, make, and serve traditional Seder foods or simply serve a favorite meal. Talk about the history of the Passover meal (from Exodus 12) and about how it foreshadowed Jesus's sacrifice on the cross.

BUILD YOUR OWN CROSS

Using 2-by-4 wood pieces, build a cross. Older kids will enjoy the process of measuring, cutting, and nailing or tying the wood together. Decide where the cross will be displayed to determine the size. Leave the cross up during Holy Week as a reminder of Jesus's sacrifice. Family or group members may want to write prayers of thanks or confession on papers and nail them to the cross throughout the week. You may choose to drape purple fabric around the cross or create a crown of thorns to hang from it as a reminder that Jesus the King died for you.

EASTER EGG STORY

Retell the story of the resurrection with children by creating "resurrection eggs." In six plastic eggs of different colors, place the following (one per egg): a bread crumb, a paper cross, a strip of cloth, a rock, and a piece of candy. One egg will remain empty. As you tell the story of Jesus's resurrection, allow kids to open each egg and discuss its meaning:

1. **Bread crumb:** Jesus ate dinner with His friends. (Luke 22:14–15)
2. **Cross:** The next day, Jesus died on the cross. (John 19:17–18)
3. **Strip of cloth:** He was wrapped in cloth and placed in a tomb. (John 19:40)
4. **Rock:** A huge stone was placed in front of the tomb. (Matthew 27:59–60)
5. **Empty egg:** Jesus's friends came to the tomb and saw the stone had been moved. The tomb was empty! (Luke 24:1–3)
6. **Candy:** We celebrate because Jesus is alive! (Matthew 28:5–6)

EASTER HIKE OR WALK

Take a hike or walk, and talk about how nature reflects the new life Christ offers us. You may see the new growth of spring, such as butterflies, flowers, or water. Reflect on how nature praises God and demonstrates His creativity and imagination.

DELIVERY BASKETS

Create baskets to deliver to community members in need—at a shelter, through an adoption organization, at a nursing home, or through some other local organization. (As a time-saving alternative, you might purchase Easter lilies to deliver instead.) When you deliver the baskets, spend time talking with and listening to people in your community you may not have met before.

PASSION PLAY

Plan to attend a local passion play. Can't find one? Put together a performance of your own. Don't worry about making it extravagant. Just like Christmas pageants can tell the story of Christmas, a simple play about Easter can bring to life the events of Holy Week and the celebration of new life we receive in Christ.

EASTER SNACKS

Make some fun Easter snacks to share with friends, neighbors, or group members.

- Join pretzel sticks together in the shape of a cross, securing them with a dab of frosting.
- Make pancakes, and have a contest for who can create the best pancake shape. You might try a cross, a stone tomb, a palm branch, or any other Easter shapes you can come up with.
- Bake classic Rice Krispies Treats, but shape them into crosses.

EMPTY TOMB ROLLS

These rolls are a fun, simple baking activity with a great lesson. Spread out the dough from canned refrigerated crescent rolls. Take a white marshmallow and explain that Jesus was perfect, without sin. Then dip the marshmallow in melted butter and explain that when Jesus died, His friends anointed His body with oils. Next dip the marshmallow in a mixture of sugar and cinnamon and explain that it represents the spices they also used to anoint the body of Christ before burying Him in a tomb. Next put each marshmallow on a strip of crescent roll dough and roll it up, making

sure to pinch all sides closed. Explain that this represents the strips of cloth they used to wrap Jesus's body. Finally, brush the tops of the rolls with a little bit of butter, and bake according to the instructions on the crescent roll package. Talk about how Jesus was in the tomb for three days. When the rolls are finished, take them out and allow them to cool slightly. Then open one carefully—surprise! Jesus is no longer in the tomb. The marshmallow is gone, giving a tasty example that Jesus has risen. Enjoy your rolls as you read John 20:1–18 together.

NEW LIFE SHIRTS

Buy two white T-shirts for each person in your family or group and lots of fabric paint. Let each person design their own shirt—it can be as simple or as wild and crazy as they like. Then talk about how now that they've colored the shirts, there is no way to make them white again. Even the best bleach in the world would not remove the stain of the paint. Then hold up a new white shirt and explain that the only way to have a white shirt again is to receive a new one. Talk about how the same is true with our lives—stained by sin, we must receive a new life and become a new creation through Jesus.

CONTAINER GARDEN TOMB

Create a container garden that represents where Jesus was buried. Fill the base of a large planter with soil. Bury a small flowerpot under the soil at an angle so the open mouth is facing up and out, like a cave. Then place a large landscape stone just to the side of the open tomb (flowerpot). Add three stick crosses to the back of the garden, some small pebbles, and any other details you would like to see. Talk about how when the women came to the tomb on Easter Sunday, they were met by the stone that was rolled away and two angels who announced that Jesus was alive!

Holy Week



PALM
SUNDAY



GOOD
FRIDAY



EASTER
SUNDAY

1

COME ALIVE TO GOD'S STORY (PALM SUNDAY)

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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

—John 3:16–17

As palm branches waved and songs and shouts of praise resounded, Jesus entered Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday. Matthew described the scene like this: “The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ‘Hosanna in the highest heaven!’” (Matthew 21:9).

Can you imagine what must have been going through the mind of Jesus? He heard the praise of the crowds yet knew all along the pain, suffering, and sacrifice that lay ahead.

The ride into Jerusalem was the next step of His journey to fulfill God’s bigger story that began at the creation of the world. Jesus’s coming and His sacrifice were not afterthoughts in God’s plan. This wasn’t a fix for a glitch in the system. This was God’s ultimate story of redemption. The Old Testament is filled with smaller stories of redemption that serve as foreshadowing of the ultimate work: Noah and the flood, Abraham and Isaac, the Passover lamb in the exodus from Egypt, to name a few. But as Jesus entered Jerusalem, He marked the beginning of a week that by God’s design would change the world forever.

The palm branches we wave represent victory—the ultimate victory of God’s love that saved the world, the ultimate victory that changes our lives.

God, I join in shouting “Hosanna!” today. Thank You that You have had a plan from the beginning to save and restore me. Please open my heart this week as I journey through and come alive to Your story of redemption. Amen.

How do you imagine it might have felt to be in the crowd in Jerusalem when Jesus rode in on Palm Sunday?

How does knowing the end of the story of Jesus's sacrifice change how we view this day?

What Old Testament stories do you recall that mirror the redemptive story of Jesus's coming?

What can you do this week to dig deeper into Jesus's journey to the cross?

2

COME ALIVE TO GOD'S LOVE

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—Romans 8:38–39

As we walk toward Easter, we are surrounded by so much cultural packaging. Easter eggs and dresses and bright colors and springs flowers and baby bunnies. And chocolate. Don't forget the chocolate. And it's all good and fun. But the truth of this Holy Week is that we have a lot of darkness to walk through before we get to the celebration—maybe it's in our past; maybe we're facing it right now. In the midst of our pain and suffering, we can hold to the hope and truth of a greater love. A love that nothing can separate us from.

Singer-songwriter David Wilcox captured a beautiful word picture in his song “Show the Way.” He compared finding hope and a reason to believe with a play written to show something stronger than hate. *Wouldn't it look like evil will win? Wouldn't it look like the hero arrives too late?* he asked. But Wilcox suggested there was something greater at work all along, even building the stage from its very beginning:

There is evil cast around us

But it's love that wrote the play

For in this darkness love can show the way.

It is God, in His great love, who wrote the script for Easter—and for our lives. Through the confusion and pain that occurred in the original Easter week and the confusion and pain that occur in our lives, God's love shows the way. Because of that, because we know nothing in the world can separate us from His love, we continue to journey toward the cross—and the resurrection.

God, thank You that Your great and perfect love underlies the Easter story and is knit into the fabric of the universe. Help me to rest in the truth that nothing can separate me from Your inexhaustible love. Amen.

How does it feel to know that God's love was the source of such great sacrifice?

Are there times you feel separated from God's love? What can serve as your reminder of the promise in today's verses from Romans?

Describe a time when you felt overwhelmed by God's love.

How will you respond to God's love?