

TEACHING GUIDE

Easter Let It Change You



SERIES OUTLINE

EASTER LET IT CHANGE YOU

4 Week Series

Write up: Three days after Jesus had been laid to rest, the stone was rolled away and the tomb was empty. Easter morning revealed a divine power that can transform our lives from the inside out. The hope of the resurrection is that even though we can't change ourselves, we can be changed. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead can be at work in you.

Week 1 - Easter: Let it Change You

Scripture: Matthew 28:1-6 // Romans 8:11 // 1 Peter 1:3-4

Write up: Jesus is alive! When we invite Jesus to live in us, His resurrection power changes every part of our lives. The beauty of Easter is that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to us to defeat sin and live lives that honor God.

Think: If Jesus Christ could defeat sin and death, there is nothing that He can not do in my life.

Feel: The resurrected Jesus gives me hope that I can be free from sin.

Do: Decide to place my faith in Jesus and receive His forgiveness and power.

Week 2 - God's Word: Let it Change You

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Write Up: More than we read the Bible, the Bible reads us. Written over a 1500 year span, God used 40 different authors to reveal to us who we truly are and who God wants for us to be. The scriptures are God's holy word and they teach us, train us, and correct us to be more like Christ.

Think: I don't have to wonder about how God wants me to live. He has given me direction in His Word.

Feel: The Bible is God's love letter to me.

Do: Make a commitment to read the Bible regularly and decide to live in obedience to it.

Week 3 - Prayer: Let it Change You

Scripture: Philippians 4:6-7

Write Up: The world is full of situations and circumstances that have the tendency to make us anxious and worried. God does not want those things to steal our peace, so He has given us the ability to communicate with Him through prayer. When we lift up the concerns of our lives, we can trust that God is in control. Prayer changes us from anxious people to people of peace.

Think: God can do anything and so I can trust Him with my life.

Feel: When I believe that God listens to my prayers, I can rest in His sovereign will.

Do: Practice a daily time of prayer to thank God for His love and ask Him to intervene.

Week 4 - Community: Let it Change You

Scripture: Galatians 6:2

Write Up: Life is full of challenges, so we can not go it alone. In line with the trinitarian nature of God, He created us to thrive in relationships with one another. Without God centered connections we run the risk of feeling lonely and isolated. However, when we invest in intentional relationships, we grow into the people God wants us to be.

Think: God does not want me to live in isolation.

Feel: Though it is hard to be vulnerable with other people, the reward of deep connection is worth it.

Do: Prayerfully consider who God has placed in your life that you can be open and honest with.

Sample

SERMONWEEK 1

Let It Change You

Week 1: Easter

Scripture: Matthew 28:1-6 // Romans 10:9 // 1 Peter 1:3-4

Write up: Jesus is alive! When we invite Jesus to live in us, His resurrection power changes every part of our lives. The beauty of Easter is that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to us to defeat sin and live lives that honor God.

Think: If Jesus Christ could defeat sin and death, there is nothing that He cannot do in my life.

Feel: The resurrected Jesus gives me hope that I can be free from sin.

Do: Decide to place my faith in Jesus and receive His forgiveness and power.

Sermon:

Good morning, church. Happy Easter! It is such an honor to be with you on this special day. Today, all around the world, the global Church is gathering to remember and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His sacrificial death on the cross and the miracle of the empty tomb offer us divine power that can change our lives from the inside out. Today we celebrate...He is risen.
(response: *He is risen indeed.*)

The passage of scripture that we are going to look at this morning is a portion of the Bible that many of us have read ourselves or heard preached on for years. It can be easy to become so familiar with the resurrection story, that we miss out on the amazing miracle that took place nearly 2,000 years ago.

So, I invite you to listen and receive into your hearts, the life changing truth of Easter afresh and anew today.

STORY: I once heard a story about a conversation that took place in a small Sunday school classroom on Easter morning. Little McKenzie wasn't trying to start a theological debate as she raised her hand, she just wanted to make a point about Jesus' resurrection. Her Sunday school teacher had tried to encourage her class with the assurance that Jesus was indeed everywhere. "There is no place where God's presence cannot be found." But for McKenzie,

that didn't sound right. So, with supreme confidence, she said, "I know one place where Jesus isn't." The teacher curiously replied, "Oh, really? Where is that?" The bright little girl declared, "I can say with full confidence that He's not in the grave!" What a great reminder for us, God is present with us today because the tomb was, and is, empty.

This was the discovery that two women named Mary made as they traveled to the tomb on that first Easter morning. Surely, they came with heavy hearts as they mourned the loss of their dear friend and teacher, Jesus, only 3 days before. He had been arrested and crucified on a Roman cross for claiming to be the Son of God and the true king of the Jews. They, along with countless others had hoped that Jesus was the promised Messiah that they'd heard of their entire lives. Countless prophetic passages from the Old Testament told of one who would come to save God's people and make all things right. But all of that prophetic hope seemed impossible now that he was dead. Here is what the Bible says in the book of Matthew chapter 28.

READ Matthew 28:1-6

There was no doubt that Jesus was dead. After he was taken down from the cross, he was placed inside of a tomb and a large heavy stone was rolled over the entrance. Guards were placed to ensure that whatever kind of following Jesus had gained over his three years of earthly ministry, would die along with him. But then something amazing happened. There was a violent earthquake, and the tomb was breached by an angel sent from God. The guards were terrified by the appearance of the heavenly being, and their bodies went into shock. This was the situation as the women arrived. They were greeted by the angel sitting on the stone. He told them not to be afraid, which was easy for him to say. Then he told them that they would not find what they had come looking for because Jesus was not in the tomb anymore. He was alive! And the angel showed them the place that Jesus used to lay, but he was nowhere to be found.

POINT #1 – HE IS NOT HERE, HE HAS RISEN

Maybe some of you have come to church this morning in a very similar way to how the women arrived at the tomb that day two thousand years ago. Maybe you have come here without hope. Maybe you have come without joy. Maybe you have come here today with the feeling that the future you had longed for is gone.

Your dreams for that relationship, that recovery, that provision, that healing, or that outcome seem impossible. But remember, the tomb is empty, our Savior has risen. This one discovery changed everything for the women at the tomb. It turned their world upside down. It flipped their despair to joy, their distress to excitement, and their discouragement to encouragement... Could it do the same for you today?

STORY: While in college I began to really struggle with some of the mistakes I had made and the sin in my life. I had grown up in the church and knew all about Jesus. I had heard sermons about what he had done on the cross for me. The problem was that I did not believe Jesus could forgive me for the people I had hurt and the wrong I had done. To me, it seemed impossible. One night I knelt in my dorm room and broke down. I told God that I wanted to believe that he could change me and if he could, I invited him to do it. I felt a burden lift and a peace I had never known before. That was the turning point in my life. (*Share a story of God doing the impossible in your life*)

It is like the late evangelist, Smith Wigglesworth, once said, "There is nothing impossible with God. All the impossibility is with us when we measure God by the limitations of our unbelief."

I am sure the women could not believe their eyes, but when the angel spoke to them that Jesus was alive, their unbelief must have melted into faith. If Jesus was alive, that meant that the impossible had become a reality and now anything was possible. Easter is the time of year when the church gathers to remind itself that Jesus has risen, and because of that truth, there is profound hope that anything is possible for us today.

POINT #2 – GOD'S MERCY CHANGES US

The truth of Jesus' resurrection becomes a focal point for the New Testament authors as they write about the impact of the Risen Savior on people's lives. Peter opens his letter in First Peter with this idea.

READ 1 Peter 1:3-4

Peter says that we have reason to celebrate! That reason is that God saw us in our broken and sinful state and graciously offered us mercy by sending Jesus to die for us, defeating sin and death by conquering the grave. I love the wording Peter uses here to describe what is offered to us; he says we are given a new

birth. This is a common phrase used in the Gospels to explain the way God changes us by the power of the resurrection. By having faith that the impossible can become possible, we are given a brand-new start, free from sin, pure and unblemished, like a newborn baby.

STORY: I remember when my first child was born. My son came into the world and was so sweet and so innocent (this was before he became a middle schooler) and as a little newborn appeared to be perfect. He had just entered the world and did not know the sting of disappointment, the pain of loss, or the hurt of mistakes. In so many ways, I envied him. (*Share a story about the power of a new birth*)

When Peter wanted to help his readers understand what the living hope was as a result of the resurrection, he said it is like a new birth. We become pure, not on our own merit, but the mercy of God. We become innocent, not in and of ourselves, but by the mercy of God. Our sins are washed clean because of the mercy of God. Not only are we made new, but we are also given an inheritance in heaven with God. God changes our past, our present, and our future by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Do you realize today that the empty tomb is for you? Do you realize that the mercy of God is offered to you? Do you realize that you can experience a new birth today? You can be changed by placing your faith in the risen Christ.

POINT #3 - A CHANGE OF HEART

The real reason there are pastors who are preaching about the empty tomb and the mercy of God today is because ultimately, they want to create the opportunity for people to experience a change of heart. The Bible talks about this change using the word repentance. The proper response for you and for me when we hear about the sacrificial death and the victorious resurrection of Jesus is to repent. In the original Greek language, this word literally means to have a change of heart, to turn around, or to go a different direction. Many might say, how do you do that? The Apostle Paul makes it clear for us in the book of Romans.

READ Romans 10:9

According to Paul, there is a two-step process to being changed, or as he says it, saved. First, you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord of your life. This is a very important step. To say that Jesus is Lord is to say that he is in charge, and