NO FEAR IN DEATH

AN EASTER STUDY GUIDE

BY CHURCH AT THE GATES
EASTER WEEK STUDY GUIDE

This study guide has been adapted from *The Final Days of Jesus* (and accompanying study materials) by Andreas J. Kostenberger, Justin Taylor and Alexander Stewart. For deeper study please dig into the book and other associated resources at Crossway.org.

*The Final Days of Jesus Book*
https://www.crossway.org/books/the-final-days-of-jesus-tpb/

*Daily Videos*
https://www.crossway.org/articles/series/the-final-days-of-jesus/

*Study Guide*
INTRODUCTION

Here at Church at the Gates we celebrate Easter! We proclaim the Gospel of Jesus and the hope that He offers to those who have been separated from God due to their sin. Through Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, we who were once far from God, have been brought near to him through Jesus’ finished work. We who were once strangers have been made part of God’s family. That is the best news that anyone could ever hope to receive!

Every year we proclaim, “He is risen!” (“He is risen indeed!”)
And yet, if we’re not careful, Easter can sneak up on us. If Jesus is who he says he is, and if the Gospel is as good and as life-changing as we believe it is, then the week between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday deserves our attention! As a church community, we wanted to set aside time to intentionally think about the road that Jesus walked that led him to the cross and culminated in the empty tomb. We want to consider all that Jesus endured on our behalf, that we might together, with fresh eyes and full lungs, worship Jesus the risen King!

This devotional is designed to help you dig into the Gospels and reflect upon the final days of Jesus. Each day there will be scripture references arranged chronologically, that lay out how Jesus’ last week unfolded. Many of us are familiar with some of the events and details that make up the final days and hours of Jesus’ life, but there is great value in setting aside time to purposefully look at the eyewitness accounts from the Gospels as a whole over the course of the week. In addition to the scripture references, there will be questions provided each day to help you reflect on all that happened through Jesus during Holy Week.

Growing in our life and relationship with Christ was never intended to be a solitary pursuit. We encourage you to walk through this study guide with others. Whether that means gathering at your dinner table, meeting virtually before work, or grabbing coffee here in town, our hope is that you’ll walk through this study guide with family, co-workers, neighbors, and friends. As we set aside time to walk through this week together, our hope is that we would come to Easter Sunday with a renewed appreciation for Jesus, the risen and coming-again King!

*If you haven’t already registered for our Easter week services, please take a minute to RSVP using the links below:

**Good Friday Service**
April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6:30pm
[https://churchteams.com/m/Register.asp?a=bGthMU5mMGhrdXc9](https://churchteams.com/m/Register.asp?a=bGthMU5mMGhrdXc9)

**Easter Sunday Services**
April 4<sup>th</sup>, 7:30am, 8:45am, 10:00am, 11:15am
[https://churchteams.com/m/Register.asp?a=cS9TUjFhdm1CTVU9](https://churchteams.com/m/Register.asp?a=cS9TUjFhdm1CTVU9)
PALM SUNDAY

Introduction
The events that took place on Palm Sunday occurred during the Jewish festival of Passover. It was a big deal for the Jews, and it brought a hustle and bustle of pilgrims into Jerusalem. A city that was around 40,000 in population would sometimes grow six times in size during the week of Passover (240,000). That’s a lot of extra bodies in a city roughly half the size of Missoula. The Roman authorities would likely have felt the need to maintain order in a city that contained both the pressure of the additional crowds and the whispers of a coming Jewish King.

Many people were excited when Jesus entered the scene in Jerusalem because they expected Him to immediately establish his rule and reign over the nation of Israel. They thought he would act like an earthy king. But as the week unfolds, we’ll see that Jesus doesn’t use his power to stomp out the enemies of Israel. Instead, he chooses to lay down his life and die. That certainly not what people expected!

Pause for a moment and pray, asking for the Lord to change you as you study His Word. Take your time and work through the texts and questions at a pace that makes sense for you. It’s not a race. Work through as many questions as you find helpful as you reflect on the final days of Jesus’ life. If you’re reading with others, assign different members of the group to read the various passages

Scripture Passages

- **John 12:20-36** - Jesus predicts his death
- **Matthew 21:12-17** - Jesus visits the temple (Mark 11:1)

Thoughts/Questions for reflection

- As you read through the passages, what details catch your attention?
- What do you notice about Jesus?
- Much of the events of this day are tied in some way to anticipation. How do you react when things turn out differently than you anticipate?
- What is one way that Jesus has personally shattered your expectations?
- Pray that God would change you (and our church family) as we reflect on God and His word this week.

Questions/considerations for families with children

- Can you think of a time when you expected something to happen and were disappointed when things didn’t work out like you thought they would?
- How did that make you feel?
- Is what Jesus came to do different that what people expected him to do?
- How was what Jesus came to do even better than what people were hoping for?
Introduction
As we journey with Jesus and his disciples, they have spent the night in a town called Bethany and are now headed back into Jerusalem. In the scriptures listed below we find Jesus displeased with both a tree and people who are not bearing fruit. These two sections aren't next to one another by mistake. Mark, the author of the book, wants us to read these passages together in order to better understand Jesus' reaction as he enters the temple.

Elsewhere in the scriptures, the nation of Israel is compared to a fig tree that no longer produces fruit (Jeremiah 8:13; Hosea 9:10, 16; Joel 1:7). All over the Bible, we read about how God expects His people to reflect Him to the people around them. He blessed Abraham so that through him, everyone would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3)! He comforts us so that we can comfort others who are hurting (2 Corinthians 1:3-5). He expects us to shine His light so that He is glorified in the world around us (Matthew 5:14-16). He saved us through the cross and resurrection of Jesus so that we would share the Gospel to those who are near to us, but far from Him (2 Corinthians 5:16-21). Since we're connected to God through Jesus, we are expected to bear fruit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Pause for a moment and pray, asking for the Lord to change you as you study His Word. Take your time and work through the texts and questions at a pace that makes sense for you. It's not a race.

Work through as many questions as you find helpful as you reflect on the final days of Jesus' life. If you're reading with others, assign different members of the group to read the various passages

Scripture Passages

- **Mark 11:12-14** - Jesus curses a fig tree (Matthew 21:18-19)
- **Mark 11:15-18** - Jesus cleanses the temple (Matthew 21:12-13, Luke 19:45-48)

Thoughts/Questions for reflection

- As you read through the passages, what details catch your attention?
- What do you notice about Jesus?
- How does each group in the passage differ in their response to Jesus?
- What is a circumstance in your life where you desire to see/experience more of the Spirit’s fruit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness or self-control)?
- Pray that God, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, would allow you to experience more of the ____________ (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness or self-control) that His presence brings.

Questions/Considerations for Families with Children

- Have you ever tried to plant something? If so, how long did it take for what you planted to grow?
- God describes to us in His Word the different types of fruit that He can bring about in our lives. Here’s the list: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).
- Read through the list of fruit again, share a time when you saw someone in your family sharing one of these things with you or someone else this week.
- Pick one of the fruits of the Spirit listed above, take turns praying that God would help you to be more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle or self-controlled this week.
TUESDAY

Introduction
As we walk through this week with Jesus, reading along the road he walked towards Calvary, we can’t help but notice that He’s had an eventful two days. On Sunday, He receives a king’s welcome as he enters Jerusalem. On Tuesday, He creates a whip and drives the merchants out of the temple courts, comparing God’s house to a den of thieves rather than a house of prayer. Not surprisingly, this has gained the attention of the religious leaders, and pressure is beginning to mount! In the texts below we read that the chief priests, scribes and elders in Jerusalem are beginning to challenge Jesus, hoping to disqualify the upstart from Nazareth.

Pause for a moment and pray, asking for the Lord to change you as you study His Word. Take your time and work through the texts and questions at a pace that makes sense for you. It’s not a race. Work through as many questions as you find helpful as you reflect on the final days of Jesus’ life. If you’re reading with others, assign different members of the group to read the various passages.

Scripture Passages

- **Mark 11:20-25** - *The lesson from the fig tree* (Matthew 21:20-22)

Thoughts/Questions for Reflection

- As you read through the passages, what details catch your attention?
- What do you notice about Jesus?
- As the religious leaders test Jesus, one scribe asks Him about the greatest commandment. How does Jesus respond?
- Read 1 John 4:16-21. What is the relationship God's love for us and our love for Him and others?
- Take time to pray, asking that God would help you understand His love in a way that gives you a renewed love, both for Him and for those around you.

Questions/Considerations for Families with Children

- In our passage today, Jesus is asked what the most important commandment is in the Scriptures. How did Jesus answer their question? If you need help answering the question read Mark 12:29-32 again.
- Who do you think is easier to love: God, or the people around you? Why do you think so?
- Read 1 John 4:19-21 as a family. We can love God because He first loved us! How does knowing this help you to love others around you? (like brothers, sisters, parents, neighbors, classmates)
- What is one thing you can do this week to show God’s love to a friend or family member?
**WEDNESDAY**

**Introduction**
As we come to the midpoint of the week, we discover that the religious leaders have had enough of this messianic troublemaker, and they make plans to kill Jesus. Their posture of contempt is not something that began on Palm Sunday as Jesus entered Jerusalem. Their fear and hard-heartedness towards Jesus is something that began early on in His ministry. As Jesus’ healing and teaching challenged long-held Jewish tradition, the religious leaders began making plans to kill Jesus (see Mark 3:1-6).

As they formulate their murderous schemes in the shadows, the people continue to be drawn to Jesus. The chief priests and elders are aware that the crowds are drawn to Jesus and so they convene in private, so not to draw attention to their actions. They fear that arresting, charging, and ultimately executing Jesus at the wrong moment could incite a riot and force Rome to take military action in an effort to maintain order.

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**Scripture Passages**

- **Luke 21:37-38** - Jesus continues teaching in the temple
- **Matthew 26:3-5** - The Sanhedrin plots to kill Jesus (Mark 14:1-2, Luke 22:1-2)

**Thoughts/Questions for Reflection**

- As you read through the passages, what details catch your attention?
- Now that we’ve reached the halfway point in our journey with Jesus to Easter Sunday, think back on what you’ve read over the last few days and reflect on the following questions.
- What have you noticed about Jesus? The crowds? The religious leaders?
- Take a minute and try and summarize all that’s happened over the last few days. Is there anything that has stood out to you through your study so far?
- Pray that God would continue to soften your heart towards Him and His Word this week.

- There is a lot of scripture packed into tomorrow’s reading. If possible, it may be helpful for you to split up the readings into a few different chunks throughout your day.

**Questions/Considerations for Families with Children**

- A lot has happened over the past few days. See if you can think back as a family and tell the story of what has happened over the last few days in your own words.
- What have you noticed about Jesus in that time? The crowds of people? The religious leaders?
- How do you think you would have responded to Jesus if you had been there in Jerusalem and seen, heard, and felt all that was going on?
THURSDAY

Introduction
On Thursday Jesus instructs His disciples to secure a lamb and a meeting room so that they can celebrate the Passover meal together. Passover was instituted early on in Jewish tradition as a time to both look back and to look forward. Each year as Jewish families celebrated Passover together, they looked back to the time when God delivered them from slavery in Egypt. But the Passover meal also invited them to look forward in expectation to a time when God would send the Messiah, bringing true freedom to God’s people. Jesus celebrates the Passover with his disciples the night before He's hung on a cross. Fully aware of the events to come, Jesus shares with the disciples of the trouble ahead: their coming desertion, and the suffering and death that He will endure. And yet, in spite of the painful road ahead, Jesus shares of the new covenant made possible through the blood of the Lamb. What the religious authorities meant for evil, God used for our ultimate good through the Gospel of Jesus!

As you look at the passages below you may realize that there’s a lot of ground to cover. If possible, It may be helpful for you to split up these readings to a few different times throughout the day if possible (e.g. - morning, noon and night).

Pause for a moment and pray, asking for the Lord to change you as you study His Word. Take your time and work through the texts and questions at a pace that makes sense for you. It’s not a race. Work through as many questions as you find helpful as you reflect on the final days of Jesus’ life. If you’re reading with others, assign different members of the group to read the various passages.

Scripture Passages

- **John 13:1-17:26** - Jesus washes the disciples’ feet and delivers the Upper Room Discourse
- **Matthew 26:30** - Jesus and the disciples sing a hymn and then depart  (Mark 14:26, Luke 22:39)
- **Luke 22:35-38** - Jesus gives instructions about what will be needed

Thoughts/Questions for Reflection

- As you read through the passages, what details catch your attention?
- What do you notice about Jesus? Do you find anything interesting about Jesus’ actions towards His disciples on the night before he is going to be betrayed, unjustly tried, and ultimately executed?
- As Jesus prays in the garden, He cries out to God in a beautiful act of surrender. If you feel led, take time to pray this prayer: “Father God, if it is possible ______________. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine. Fill in the blank with a circumstance that you would like to surrender to God in prayer.

- There is a lot of scripture packed into tomorrow’s reading. If possible, it may be helpful for you to split up the readings into a few different chunks throughout your day.

Questions/Considerations for Families with Children

There is a lot of ground to cover in today’s reading. For the sake of time and attention, it could be helpful to focus in on one of the above passages instead of feeling the need to read through all the scriptures together. For example, it could be helpful to focus in on Jesus washing the disciples feet (John 13:1-17) and talk about different ways that we can follow Jesus’ example and serve others. Additionally, you could zero in on Jesus praying in the Garden (Matthew 26:36-46) and talk about ways that we can pray for God’s will to be done in our lives, even if that means that we don’t get what we want in the time or way we want it.
FRIDAY

Introduction
It would be difficult to overstate the suffering that Jesus endured on Good Friday. In the scriptures below we read that Jesus experienced betrayal, injustice, condemnation, mocking, beatings, crucifixion, and ultimately death, all in a 24-hour period. Crucifixion was a form of punishment that was reserved for the most heinous criminals. The form of punishment was designed to humiliate and torture criminals to death all in plain view of the public. Jesus endured unspeakable hardship as he bore our sins and the weight of God's wrath on the cross. And yet Hebrews 12:2 encourages us to look to Jesus, who “for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, scorning its shame.” Jesus, in the place where joy and sorrow meet, endured suffering, and made a way for those who are separated from God to experience new life.

As a church, we will take time to reflect on our sin, God's wrath and Jesus' suffering at our Good Friday Service (Friday, April 2nd at 6:30pm). Please join us as we worship Jesus, the crucified and risen King. RSVP at the following link: https://churchteams.com/m/Register.asp?a=bGthMU5mMGhrdXc9

As you look at the passages below you may realize that there's a lot of ground to cover. If possible, it may be helpful for you to split up these readings to a few different times throughout the day if possible (e.g. morning, noon and night).

Pause for a moment and pray, asking for the Lord to change you as you study His Word. Take your time and work through the texts and questions at a pace that makes sense for you. It's not a race. Work through as many questions as you find helpful as you reflect on the final days of Jesus' life. If you're reading with others, assign different members of the group to read the various passages.

Scripture Passages

- Matthew 27:3-10 - Judas returns the silver and hangs himself
- Luke 23:8-12 - Herod questions Jesus and sends him back to Pilate
- Mark 15:16-23 - Jesus is mocked & beaten (Matthew 27:27-31)
- Mark 15:42-47 - Jesus is buried in Joseph’s tomb

Thoughts/Questions for Reflection

• As you read through the passages, what details catch your attention?
• What do you notice about Jesus? What emotions do you feel as you reflect on the events of Good Friday?
• Take time to pray to God, thanking Jesus, the innocent One who died in the place of the guilty.

Questions/Considerations for Families with Children

There's a lot of content packed into today's reading. For the sake of time and attention, it could be helpful to focus in on the events of Friday that follow the trial. The scriptures that follow Matthew 27:15-26 in the list above. Since these passages recount the suffering, crucifixion and death of Jesus, we encourage sensitivity as you walk young children through these passages. Do your best to answer their questions and help them walk through their emotions by sharing your own. If a video would be helpful, the Bible Project put together a video that gives a good summary of passion week before zeroing in on the events of Good Friday. Kids and parents alike might find this video helpful: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_unHmAf7INk&ab_channel=BibleProject.
**SUNDAY**

Introduction
As we come to Sunday, the few details are shared about the day's events in the Gospels (especially compared to the volume of content on Thursday and Friday). No mention is made of the disciples, but we can assume based on their behavior on Sunday (hiding together behind locked doors), that they spent much of Sunday in grief, confusion, and fear. If you already know how the Easter story ends, do your best to put yourselves in the disciples' shoes. They had spent the last few years of their lives devoting their time and energy to a man who was convicted as a criminal and sentenced to death on a cross. Any hopes they had of Jesus being the promised Messiah were crushed by the reality of Jesus' death. It is likely that the disciples spent Sunday sitting in their grief as the magnitude of the week's events began to sink in. The details are given on Sunday come from the Gospel of Matthew. We learn that the religious leaders make arrangements to secure the tomb. They are fearful that the followers of Jesus will attempt to steal His body and claim that he has resurrected. Both the disciples and the religious leaders respond in fear for different reasons. It seems that neither group, despite Jesus' claims, believed that He would rise from the dead.

*Pause for a moment and pray, asking for the Lord to change you as you study His Word. Take your time and work through the text and questions at a pace that makes sense for you.*

Scripture Passage

- Matthew 27:62-66 - The chief priests and Pharisees place guards at the tomb

Thoughts/Questions for Reflection

- As you read through the passage, are there any details that catch your attention?
- Do your best to put yourself in the place of the disciples, given all that happened during the week, what are you likely to be feeling and experiencing the day after Jesus was crucified?
- If you know how the Easter story ends, it can be tempting to skip ahead to the good news, what are some benefits to sitting with the reality of Jesus' death before celebrating His resurrection?
- While on Saturday Jesus' body was in the grave, God was not defeated, and His will was not thwarted. Instead, through the death (and resurrection) of Jesus, the lasting sting of death will ultimately be conquered. Audrey Assad recorded a song that beautifully reflects on this reality. Take a few minutes to revel in this good news.

Death Be Not Proud: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rb9HZgSlp0c&ab_channel=AudreyAssad](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rb9HZgSlp0c&ab_channel=AudreyAssad)

By: Audrey Assad / Inspired by John Donne's poem of the same name

Death, be not proud, though the whole world fear you. Mighty and dreadful you may seem. But death, be not proud, for your pride has failed you. You will not kill me. Though you may dwell in plague and poison, you're a slave to fate and desperate men. So, death, if your sleep be the gates to Heaven, why your confidence? When you will be no more. You will be no more. When you will be no more. Even death will die. Death, be not proud, cause even death will die.

Questions/Considerations for Families with Children

- Have you ever waited for something to happen and things didn't turn out like you hoped? If you can think of a specific, time how did that make you feel?
- How do you think the disciples were feeling the day after Jesus, their friend, died?
- How does it make you feel to know that Jesus died for your sin?
- Jesus loves it when we pray; what would you like to say to Him right now?
EASTER SUNDAY

Introduction
The day has arrived. In a miraculous fashion, on Easter Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead! People have been talking about it ever since. As Jesus appears, first to the women, then to the disciples and to others, they rightly respond in confusion and amazement. Jesus, who was crucified three days earlier has defeated death! How amazing! The followers of Jesus were still in the midst of their grief when they were confronted with the risen Savior.

We’re going to take time today to worship Jesus, the risen and coming-again King. If you haven’t already RSVP’d for one of our services, please register here: https://churchteams.com/m/Register.asp? a=cS9TUjFhdm1CTVU9.

2,000 years ago, Jesus brought hope to the world. As He rose from the grave, He redefined our future, giving us freedom from hopelessness, shame, and brokenness. We would love for you to join us as we celebrate Easter and are reminded that hope is here through Jesus.

Pause for a moment and pray, asking for the Lord to change you as you study His Word. Take your time and work through the texts and questions at a pace that makes sense for you. It’s not a race. Work through as many questions as you find helpful as you reflect on the final days of Jesus’ life. If you’re reading with others, assign different members of the group to read the various passages.

Scripture Passage
- Matthew 28:8-10 - The women meet Jesus and go tell the disciples (Luke 24:8-11, John 20:2)
- John 20:3-10 - Peter and John rush to the tomb (Luke 24:12)
- John 20:11-18 - Mary returns to the tomb and encounters Jesus
- Luke 24:13-35 - Jesus appears to Cleopas and a friend on the road to Emmaus
- Luke 24:36-49 - Jesus appears to the disciples (minus Thomas) (John 20:19-23)

Thoughts/Questions for Reflection
• Think back on your journey through the Gospels this week. What did you notice or experience in a fresh way as you walked through the events each day?
• How do you see Jesus differently as a result of spending time in the Word this week?
• How did this study help you to intentionally experience Easter week?
• Take a minute to respond to God in prayer, telling Him what you appreciate about Him, His Son, His Spirit and His Word in light of Easter.

Questions/Considerations for Families with Children
• Great job! You made it through the Easter Week Study!
• What is one thing you learned through your time together in the Word this week?
• How can you as a family celebrate the good news of Easter?
• Pray that God would use your family to share God’s love with people who are near to you but far from Him!
CONGRATULATIONS

You made it through a weeklong study on Easter Week. We hope that your time in God’s word helped to give you a deeper appreciation for the road that Jesus walked from Palm Sunday to Easter! Through Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, we who were once far from God, have been brought near to him through Jesus’ finished work. We who were once strangers have been made part of God’s family! May we live as those who have been redeemed!

LOOKING FOR WAYS TO DIG DEEPER?

If studying God’s Word this week prompted deeper questions or if you’d like to talk with someone about what you’ve learned we’d love to sit down and chat more about Easter week with you in person. Reach out to Katie Resch (cg@churchatthegates.org) to get connected with a member of our staff team.

WE’VE GOT A FREE BOOK FOR YOU

The first step to knowing God is finding out more about who He really is. We’d like to offer you this helpful book by Ray Pritchard, as our gift to you. To get your copy contact us at cg@churchatthegates.org.