

Palm Sunday

On the Sunday before Easter, take a few minutes after breakfast, lunch or dinner to celebrate the Messiah's arrival.

READ: John 12:12-15

DISCUSS: Pose these questions to better understand the reading:

Q: What did the people shout as Jesus entered the city riding a donkey?

A: They shouted "Hosanna!" which means "Save us!"

Q: Why do you think the people were so excited about Jesus' arrival?

A: They had great hopes because they had seen Him do many miracles, including raising a man from the dead! (John 11:38-44)

Q: Do you think the people realized Jesus would need to die on a cross in order to bring them salvation?

A: No. In fact, Jesus had to explain it to His closest followers. (John 12:20-33)

ACTIVITY #1: Since Jesus came for us, hold your own family celebration of Jesus' arrival by taking turns remembering one of the miracles He did among the people (i.e., turned water to wine, walked on water, calmed a storm, feeding five thousand, etc.). When everyone finishes sharing Jesus' miracles, conclude your time in prayer.

ACTIVITY #2: A parent stands at the top of stairs and tells the children he/she wants them to join him/her upstairs in "heaven." The kids can't touch the stairs or the railing. Let them mull over the dilemma. If they can't figure out the solution, coach them to ask the parent to come downstairs and carry the kids up on his/her back. Explain that Jesus came down to us to make a way because we could not do it ourselves.

PRAY: Turn the excited anticipation of the Palm Sunday crowd into your family's prayer by reading aloud the following:

"Dear Lord, we know that You are the One who came to bring us salvation. We know that You are the true King of our lives. We praise You this day for coming down to us so that we could spend eternity with You. We look forward to this Holy Week and focusing on what You did for us. Amen."

If your child is ready, you may want to use the *Prepare to Lead Your Child To Christ* materials available from the HomePointe Center or lakepointe.org/faithpath as a follow-up to the activities.

Going Further Resources

The Easter Story Egg
by Natalie Ard

Resurrection Eggs
by FamilyLife

**The Wonder of Easter:
An Easter Journey for the Whole Family**
by Ed Drew

Amon's Adventure: A Family Story for Easter
by Arnold Ytreeide

A Very Happy Easter
by Tim Thornborough

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Easter @Home

A Family Guide for Holy Week

Throughout Church history, families have joined together to commemorate and celebrate the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. No holiday season is more central to our faith or more important to emphasize with the next generation.

The following will provide your family with an easy-to-implement idea for each day from Palm Sunday to Easter. Try one or more to help your family focus on the true meaning of Holy Week together.

Monday Through Thursday

Take a few minutes at breakfast, dinner or bedtime to focus the family on key events from the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry.

MONDAY: Read John 13:1-17. In ancient households the lowest job of all was to wash the feet of guests. Usually this task was only carried out by servants. Discuss the many ways Jesus humbled Himself while on earth. Take turns washing one another's feet and then read Philippians 2:5-8 before praying "Lord Jesus, thank You for humbling Yourself for us. Help us to do the same with one another. Amen."

TUESDAY: Read John 17:20-23. Jesus actually prayed for those of us who would believe in Him in the future. He asked His Father to help us show unity by loving each other. Discuss how your family can show love to each other in a way that demonstrates God's love. (Couples should read Ephesians 5:31-33 to reinforce how marriage is intended to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church.) Pray "Lord Jesus, help our family to reflect the kind of selfless love You prayed for us. Amen."

WEDNESDAY: Read Luke 22:47-54. Even while Jesus is being wrongfully arrested, He shows love and compassion for the arresting soldiers. Pray "Lord Jesus, help us to show compassion and to love one another even when others treat us wrongly. Amen."

THURSDAY: Read Luke 23:13-34. Pilate condemned Jesus because he feared a riot among the people. These were many of the same people who shouted "Hosanna" just a few days earlier as Jesus arrived in Jerusalem. Later, while on the cross, Jesus prayed for Pilate, the soldiers and the crowd when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Pray "Lord Jesus, thank You for being willing to forgive us even when we do the most terrible things. Give us the grace to also forgive one another. Amen."

Good Friday

Help your children understand the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross with one of these simple activities.

YOUNGER CHILDREN: Have the children nail two boards together in the shape of a cross. Then read Romans 3:23 together. Now have each person in the family write their name on a piece of paper along with the word "sins." Invite each person to list the sinful things he or she has done (i.e., losing temper, saying bad words, gossiping). Very young children can simply draw mean faces. Then, one at a time, allow each person to nail his or her list to the cross as a symbol of Jesus taking our sins with Him and paying the penalty for our wrongdoing. Conclude by reading Romans 5:8 and Romans 6:23 together before praying "Lord Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross to pay for our sins. Amen."

OLDER CHILDREN: Watch one of the following movies that feature Jesus' trial, scourging and death. Talk about the movie and then pray together, "Lord Jesus, thank You for the sacrifice You made on our behalf. Amen."

The Gospel of John: A 2003 film that depicts word-for-word scenes from John's gospel, including Christ's death and resurrection.

The Passion of the Christ: This 2004 film is rated R for violent intensity during the scourging of Jesus. This is a powerful reminder of Christ's sacrifice, for viewing by adults and teens.

Saturday (Easter Eve)

Take a few minutes at breakfast, dinner or bedtime to reflect on what it was like for Jesus' followers after they lay Him in the tomb.

READ: Matthew 27:57-66

DISCUSS: Have each member of the family name one person who knew Jesus and describe what they must have been thinking/feeling on the day before His resurrection (i.e., Peter felt guilty for denying Jesus, Mary felt grief over losing her beloved son, Pilate felt nervous for condemning an innocent man).

PRAY: "Lord Jesus, thank You for going into the grave so that we could overcome death! Amen."

ACTIVITY: Before going to bed, spend time together making "Resurrection Cookies" by following the directions available at creativebiblestudy.com/resurrectioncookies.html

Easter Day

Purchase a "Resurrection Eggs™" kit or create your own with empty plastic eggs numbered 1-12. Each egg should contain a symbol that prompts re-telling part of the Easter week story as follows...

EGG #1: A small leaf as a "palm branch" symbolizing the scene described in Matthew 21:1-11

EGG #2: A small cloth with perfume on it to symbolize the scene in John 12:2-8

EGG #3: A piece of cereal to illustrate the Last Supper described in Matthew 26:17-19

EGG #4: Three dimes to symbolize Judas' betraying of Christ as described in Matthew 27:3

EGG #5: Toothpicks glued in the shape of a cross to reflect Jesus carrying His cross as described in John 19:17

EGG #6: A small thorny branch or a single thorn to show Jesus' crown as described in John 19:2

EGG #7: Small dice to show soldiers gambled for Jesus' clothes as explained in John 19:23-24

EGG #8: A tiny nail or straight pin to illustrate nailing Jesus to the cross from John 19:18, 37 & 20:25-29

EGG #9: A small bit of sponge to illustrate Matthew 27:34

EGG #10: Several whole cloves or other spices to reflect Jesus' burial as described in John 19:40

EGG #11: A small rock to illustrate the tomb covering of John 20:1

EGG #12: Empty to show "He is risen!" per John 20:6-7

After this activity, store the eggs in a carton and then allow the children to hunt for chocolate eggs, Easter baskets or some other goodies to celebrate the joy of Jesus' resurrection from the dead! Then encourage them to share the story with family, friends and others throughout the day.

Celebrate Easter