

# Praying Through

THE PASSION, DEATH,  
AND RESURRECTION

of Jesus

A Prayer and Scripture Reflection for Each Day of Holy Week



AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

# Easter is almost here!



Before we put on our Sunday best and join friends and family to celebrate the day Jesus triumphed over death, we want to invite you on a prayer journey through Holy Week.

Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday and ends on Easter Sunday. During Holy Week, we commemorate the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a week to marvel at the fullness of both Jesus's deity and his humanity. It is also a week that can bring on a range of emotions: joy, dread, sorrow, and eventually jubilation.

As we follow Jesus's footsteps through Holy Week, we have an opportunity to better understand and embrace his unconditional love for us.

Jesus's life, suffering, death, and ultimate victory over sin and death was all for you. Jesus did what we could not do. He paid the price for our sin. He made a way for us to have a relationship with God. And he did it all because he loves us.

*Real love isn't our love for God, but his love for us. God sent his Son to be the sacrifice by which our sins are forgiven.*

1 JOHN 4:10 CEV

As you enter Holy Week, use this guide to rediscover the power and beauty of Jesus's journey to the cross. In it you will find:

- A day-by-day account of key events during Jesus's final days on earth.
- Prayers of gratitude and dedication for each day.
- Scriptures to remind you of God's love and plan to redeem us.

Throughout Holy Week, may you always remember the most precious truth of Easter:

*He is risen!*

## HOLY WEEK TIMELINE:

# Step-by-Step with Jesus

### Palm Sunday: A Triumphal Entry

Matthew 21:1-11



After many months of travelling throughout Palestine, Jesus makes his triumphant return to Jerusalem to observe Passover. He enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey, where he is greeted by crowds of people who lay their cloaks and palm branches across the road, shouting, "Praise to David's Son! God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord!" (verse 9 GNT).

The events of Palm Sunday were the fulfillment of the prophecy given to Zechariah:

*Everyone in Jerusalem, celebrate and shout! Your king has won a victory, and he is coming to you. He is humble and rides on a donkey; he comes on the colt of a donkey.*

ZECHARIAH 9:9 CEV

The long-awaited King of the Jews had come, humbly riding on a donkey, to save his people. But there was a problem. There was growing unrest among the chief priests and other Jewish leaders, who did not believe Jesus was the one destined to save the Jews. They did not believe he was the Messiah, the Son of God. In their eyes, Jesus was misleading the people and disrupting their traditions. But Jesus continued to grow in popularity. And as his reputation grew, so did the opposition from these leaders.

Palm Sunday shows us Jesus's unwavering commitment to rescue us. He enters Jerusalem despite his awareness that soon the Jewish leaders would carry out their plot for his destruction and many would turn on him. It also reminds us of his identity as the true King who came to serve and deliver his people in an unexpected way.

#### Questions:

- What do you think the Jewish people expected their king's victory to look like? What did Jesus's victory ultimately look like?
- In what ways does your life reflect that Jesus is your King?

#### Prayer:

*Jesus, you are the one true King. I lift my voice and shout: praise be to God for saving me! Today, I declare that there is no other King but you. I worship you and you alone. In your name, I pray. Amen.*

## HOLY MONDAY:

# A Temple Visit and Miraculous Healings

Matthew 21:12–22



On Monday, Jesus enters the courtyards of the Temple. When he arrives, he finds the courts full of thieves. They were buying and selling in dishonorable ways to seekers who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. This misuse of the Temple angers Jesus. The Temple was supposed to be a place to draw near to God and pray, but instead it's being used to take advantage of others by thieves looking to make money. And more devastating is the fact that the Jewish leaders allowed it! Jesus clears the Temple of those making a profit off the people coming to worship there. He overturns their tables and says:

*“It is written in the Scriptures that God said, ‘My Temple will be called a house of prayer.’ But you are making it a hideout for thieves!”*

MATTHEW 21:13 GNT

Jesus then heals the blind and the crippled who come to him in the Temple. His show of compassion is met with shouts of praise, which only serve to further upset Jesus's opposers. At the end of a day well spent, Jesus goes to Bethany to be with his friends.

Holy Monday reminds us of our sinful nature and need for a savior. As we read about the Temple of God being used to extort others for profit and personal gain and the Jewish leaders allowing such corruption, may we also be reminded that we are not without sin. Scripture says, “All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory” (Romans 3:23 CEV).

### Questions:

- What do you think the religious leaders thought and felt about Jesus clearing out the Temple courts? Do you think Jesus still desires to clear out some things in our lives and in our churches today?
- Do you get angry when you witness unjust situations in our world today? What does Ephesians 4:26 tell us about anger?

### Prayer:

*Jesus, thank you for your Spirit, which dwells in me and enables me to be filled with truly good qualities for the glory and praise of your name (Philippians 1:11). Remove from me anything that isn't pleasing to you. May my life reflect wholehearted devotion and worship, chasing nothing but you. In your name, I pray. Amen.*

## HOLY TUESDAY:

# Teaching in the Temple and on The Mount of Olives

Matthew 23:1–25:46



On Tuesday, after clearing the Temple courts, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law question Jesus's authority to do the things he was doing. Knowing their motive is to entrap him, Jesus addresses them by saying:

*“You Pharisees and teachers are show-offs, and you’re in for trouble! You wash the outside of your cups and dishes, while inside there is nothing but greed and selfishness.”*

MATTHEW 23:25 CEV

Jesus goes on to call them hypocrites, blind guides, and whitewashed tombs which look fine on the outside but are full of bones and decaying corpses on the inside. They burden their own people with heavy loads, and they have neglected justice, mercy, and honesty. He then warns the crowds and disciples about the unbelief of the nation's religious leaders. After Jesus condemns the Pharisees, he goes to the Mount of Olives with his disciples, where he delivers the Olivet Discourse—extensive teachings about what will happen in the next few days, about the destruction of the Temple, and regarding the signs of the end of the age.

Holy Tuesday is a reminder that Jesus's suffering began even before his crucifixion. His heart is broken by Israel's lack of faith and their disobedience. It is also a reminder that Jesus's heart breaks for all people who are far from him. Today, Jesus offers salvation and the forgiveness of sins to all who believe in him.

### Questions:

- What do you think Jesus was feeling on Holy Tuesday? What does Matthew 23:37 reveal about what Jesus is feeling as he addresses the Jewish people?
- Read 1 Peter 4:13. How does this Scripture encourage you as you face your own trials and suffering?

### Prayer:

*Jesus, thank you that despite all you suffered physically and emotionally, you were obedient until death. Thank you that as a co-heir with you, I can share in your glory and your suffering (Romans 8:17). Help me to also join you in remembering the pain and suffering of those around me. In your name, I pray. Amen.*

## SPY WEDNESDAY:

# Anointing and A Plot to Betray Jesus

Matthew 26:6–16



On Wednesday, after two days teaching in Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples spend time in Bethany at the home of Simon, the leper. While there, a woman anoints Jesus's head with expensive perfume. This angers the disciples, who argue that the perfume should not be wasted in this way. Instead, it should be sold and the money given to the poor (verse 9). But Jesus responds:

*“Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing for me. You will always have the poor with you, but you won’t always have me. She has poured perfume on my body to prepare it for burial.”*

MATTHEW 26:10b–12 CEV

John’s Gospel reveals that Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples, does not really care about the poor. He carries the group’s moneybag and sometimes steals from it (see John 12:6). He is even preparing to meet the Sanhedrin to have Jesus arrested in exchange for money. The reward for this betrayal? Just thirty pieces of silver.

Judas the spy sets the plot in motion for Jesus to be arrested. Judas was a follower, a friend, and one of the twelve disciples who travelled with Jesus, shared meals with him, heard his teachings, and saw him perform miracles.

Spy Wednesday provides an opportunity to consider the personal pain and betrayal Jesus would suffer on his journey to the cross to save us.

### Questions:

- How do you think Jesus felt knowing that one of his closest friends was plotting to betray him?
- Do you think some of our actions or attitudes still disappoint Jesus today? How?

### Prayer:

*Jesus, help me to love you unashamedly, even if it appears foolish to others. I also pray that my heart’s greatest desire will always be to obey you rather than to become rich (Psalm 119:36). Please forgive me for the times I have sought my own selfish gain over following you. In your name, I pray. Amen.*

## MAUNDY THURSDAY:

# The Last Supper, Prayer in the Garden, Betrayal, and Denial

Matthew 26:17-75



The word “Maundy” comes from the Latin word “mandatum,” meaning command, and refers to Jesus’s command to his disciples to love one another (see John 13:34-35). Jesus gives this instruction as well as institutes the Holy Communion during his last meal with the disciples: the Passover Feast.

After the meal, Jesus and the disciples go to the Garden of Gethsemane. In great anguish, Jesus prays fervently to his Father. He is in such distress that his sweat is like drops of blood (Luke 22:44). Jesus asks Peter, James, and John to stay awake and pray with him, but they keep falling asleep. Following prayer, Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss, leading to his arrest.

Jesus is taken to the house of Caiaphas the High Priest, where the chief priests and the whole Council try to find some false evidence against him. As he is being questioned, Peter is sitting outside in the courtyard watching. Peter watches in horror as Jesus is found guilty of claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and is beaten and slapped in the face. Then people in the crowd notice Peter. They claim he is a follower of Jesus. But Peter denies knowing Jesus three times, the final time saying,

*“I swear that I am telling the truth! May God punish me if I am not!  
I do not know that man!”*

MATTHEW 26:74 GNT

Maundy Thursday reminds us that Jesus suffered alone. Left alone in the garden to pray, betrayed by Judas, and denied by Peter three times, Jesus endured the ridicule and shame by himself. He and he alone paid the price for our sins. He endured loneliness, betrayal, and rejection to save us.

### Questions:

- Have you been hurt or betrayed by someone close to you? How does it help you to know that Jesus has felt that depth of pain?
- Why do you think Jesus never wavered from his mission to die on the cross despite all he suffered?

### Prayer:

*Jesus, as I read about your journey to the cross, I am overwhelmed by your love for me. Thank you that even though you endured trials of various kinds you never gave up because you had me on your mind. Teach me to love others as you have loved me and to share your amazing love with as many people as possible. In your name, I pray. Amen.*

## GOOD FRIDAY:

# The Cross

Matthew 27:1-56



On Friday, the chief priests and other Jewish leaders take Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. They lay out their charges and get what they desire—a death sentence for Jesus!

Jesus is condemned to death by crucifixion. At that time, crucifixion was the cruelest form of death. But before he is crucified, Jesus is tied to a pillar and flogged with a nine-tailed whip with metal tips on the end of every strap. After being flogged, a crown of thorns is forced onto Jesus's head as the soldiers taunt him by saying, "Long live the King of the Jews!" (verse 29 GNT). They strike Jesus on the head with a stick, spit on him, and humiliate him. Jesus is then led to Golgotha, where he is nailed to the cross.

*Once again Jesus shouted, and then he died. At once the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, and rocks split apart.*

MATTHEW 27:50-51 CEV

Good Friday is a reminder of how such a horrible day still means something good to us. It is horrible because Jesus suffered a punishment he didn't deserve and endured being whipped, beaten, mocked, and killed. But it is ultimately good because, through Jesus's willing sacrifice on the cross for us, we have been reconciled to God our Father.

### Questions:

- Read Isaiah 53:3-12. What emotions do you feel as you read this passage? How does this passage reflect Jesus's attitude as he endures suffering and is led to the cross?
- As you reflect on the passion of our Lord Jesus and the depth of his suffering, how would you describe the depth of Jesus's love for you?

### Prayer:

*Jesus, thank you for paying the penalty for my sin by offering yourself as the perfect sacrifice. Thank you for your death, which gives me life now and eternal life. Help me to never take for granted the cost of my salvation and your enormous gift of love. In your name, I pray. Amen.*



## HOLY SATURDAY: Silence and Stillness

Matthew 27:57–66



Holy Saturday is a day of mourning and darkness. It will be the only full day in history where Jesus's body lies dead and buried. But it is also a day of unspoken thoughts and questions.

Some among the crowds who welcomed Jesus as he entered Jerusalem and then jeered at him on his way to Golgotha probably wonder, *Was he truly the Messiah, the promised king? If he was the Son of God, how could he suffer such a horrific death?* Jesus's followers—the ones who saw him perform miracles, overturn the tables in the Temple, and teach on the Mount of Olives—likely wonder, *How can Jesus be dead?* And what will happen to us now? The chief priests have questions, too. According to Scripture, Jesus's prediction still rings fresh in their minds:

*“Sir, we remember what this liar said while he was still alive. He claimed in three days he would come back from death.”*

MATTHEW 27:63 CEV

So many questions. So many emotions. But there is only silence.

Jesus's body is placed in a tomb by Joseph of Arimathea and guarded by Roman soldiers for the next three days, so that the disciples couldn't go and steal his body and then tell the people that he was alive. The silence is deafening. But amid the silence there is the hope of Jesus's promise that he would rise again (Matthew 16:21).

Holy Saturday is a day to sit in that moment between the cross and the empty tomb. It is a day to remember that even when God is silent, we still have hope in his promises. Maybe you are sitting in that moment, waiting for things to get better, but there is only silence. Today, you can be sure that just as Jesus fulfilled his promise to die and rise again in three days, he will fulfill his promises to you. No matter how loud the silence, cling to your hope in Jesus.

### Questions:

- Jesus was a teacher, friend, and Messiah to his disciples. How do you think they felt when Jesus lay dead in the grave?
- How does Holy Saturday give you hope in moments when God is silent?

### Prayer:

*Jesus, help me to enter the sorrow and silence of Holy Saturday. Teach me to always hope in you, even in the tomb seasons of life, and to trust in your perfect timing as I wait for you. In your name, I pray. Amen.*

## EASTER SUNDAY:

# The Resurrection

Matthew 28:1-13



Early Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary go to the tomb where Jesus's body was laid. Suddenly there is a violent earthquake, and an angel of the Lord comes down from heaven, rolls away the stone that was in front of the tomb, and sat on it. Then the angel says to the women:

*“Don't be afraid! I know you are looking for Jesus, who was nailed to a cross. He isn't here! God has raised him to life, just as Jesus said he would. Come, see the place where his body was lying.”*

MATTHEW 28:5-6 CEV

Jesus is risen!

Easter Sunday is the day we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus was crucified, buried, and rose from death three days later. God's extraordinary plan to redeem us is complete!

We celebrate Easter because it proves that Jesus is the Son of God, the one true King. Jesus gave his life as a ransom for our sins. His triumph over death means eternal life for all those who believe in him.

Happy Easter!

### Questions:

- As you read and reflected on the events of Jesus's final days on earth, what stood out to you? How did these readings help you better understand Jesus's suffering and love for you?
- How can we experience Jesus's resurrection power in our everyday lives? How can we share the hope of Easter Sunday with the world?

### Prayer:

*Dear God, thank you for sending your only Son, Jesus, to save us. Precious Jesus, as I reflect on your journey to the cross, I remember your pain, suffering, and sacrifice. Thank you for your shed blood which purchased my salvation and has given me the hope of eternal life with you. Today, I recommit my heart to serving you and following you all the days of my life. In your name, I pray. Amen.*

# 10 Scriptures that Point to God's Redemptive Plan



- *For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.*

JOHN 3:16 GNT

- *Christ died for us at a time when we were helpless and sinful. No one is really willing to die for an honest person, though someone might be willing to die for a truly good person. But God showed how much he loved us by having Christ die for us, even though we were sinful.*

*But there is more! Now that God has accepted us because Christ sacrificed his life's blood, we will also be kept safe from God's anger. Even when we were God's enemies, he made peace with us, because his Son died for us. Yet something even greater than friendship is ours. Now that we are at peace with God, we will be saved by the life of his Son.*

ROMANS 5:6-10 CEV

- *What we do see is Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels. Because of God's gift of undeserved grace, Jesus died for everyone. And now that Jesus has suffered and died, he is crowned with glory and honor!*

HEBREWS 2:9 CEV

- *"The Son of Man did not come to be served; he came to serve and to give his life to redeem many people."*

MARK 10:45 GNT

- *Christ himself carried our sins in his body to the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. It is by his wounds that you have been healed.*

1 PETER 2:24 GNT

- *Christ died for sins once and for all, a good man on behalf of sinners, in order to lead you to God. He was put to death physically, but made alive spiritually.*

1 PETER 3:18 GNT

- *He suffered and endured  
great pain for us,  
but we thought his suffering  
was punishment from God.  
He was wounded and crushed  
because of our sins;  
by taking our punishment,  
he made us completely well.*

#### ISAIAH 53:4-5 CEV

- *Christ sacrificed his life's blood to set us free, which means our sins are now forgiven. Christ did this because of God's gift of undeserved grace to us. God has great wisdom and understanding, and by what Christ has done, God has shown us his own mysterious ways. Then when the time is right, God will do all he has planned, and Christ will bring together everything in heaven and on earth.*

#### EPHESIANS 1:7-10 CEV

- *I passed on to you what I received, which is of the greatest importance: that Christ died for our sins, as written in the Scriptures; that he was buried and that he was raised to life three days later, as written in the Scriptures.*

#### I CORINTHIANS 15:3-4 GNT

- *It was by God's own decision that the Son has in himself the full nature of God. Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through his Son's blood on the cross and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven.  
  
At one time you were far away from God and were his enemies because of the evil things you did and thought. But now, by means of the physical death of his Son, God has made you his friends, in order to bring you, holy, pure, and faultless, into his presence.*

#### COLOSSIANS 1:19-22 GNT

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