

# IF I COULD ASK GOD ANYTHING

SAMPLER

## 8-Day Easter Week Family Devotional

Daily readings from  
Palm Sunday to Easter

awesome  
Bible answers  
for curious kids

kathryn  
slattery





# 8-Day Easter Week Family Devotional

*Daily readings from Palm Sunday to Easter*

Dear Parents,

As I recently strolled down the grocery aisle, I was taken aback by the shelves piled high with jelly beans... plastic-wrapped gift baskets... pink and yellow marshmallow chicks... giant chocolate bunnies... No wonder kids get confused about Easter! I thought.

For believing moms and dads, explaining Christmas to our kids is a cinch. This is because the birth of Jesus is relatively simple to grasp. Nativity scenes, carols and pageants all reinforce the biblical story, making it easier to keep Santa Claus in perspective.

But what about Easter? How do we begin to explain to our kids something as profound, powerful and mysterious as the death and resurrection of Jesus, which is, after all, at the very heart of our Christian faith? How do we help our kids understand that when it comes to Easter, Jesus (not the Easter Bunny!) is the reason for the season?

The good news is that our children come into the world hard-wired to grasp deep spiritual truths -- even something so amazing and miraculous as the Resurrection. This is because for children, believing in God is instinctive. It is as natural as breathing. Jesus recognized this when He said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16).

Bottom line: Our children are hungry for the truths of God. So don't be shy. Don't hold back. I encourage you to use this 8-Day Easter Week Family Devotional to boldly explore what God has to say about Easter, the most important event in human history, and to grow in faith together.

Beginning on Palm Sunday, I suggest that you select a regular time (perhaps after dinner, or before bedtime) to read and discuss the first question and answer. You might want to begin and close each devotional time with a short prayer. After Palm Sunday, read and discuss one question each day for the next seven days, completing the series on Easter Sunday. You might want to have a Bible handy, in case you want to look up scripture references. If in your conversations, your child poses a question for which you don't have an answer, don't be afraid to say, "I don't know," or, "Let's look in the Bible," or, "Let's ask our pastor about that." And don't be surprised when your child teaches you!

Of course there are an infinite number of questions about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus -- more than can ever be answered in one week. What's important, is that in these eight days leading up to Easter, you and your child will have a powerful opportunity to grow together in the knowledge and love of our Lord. You and your child will gain a clearer understanding of not only what you believe, but why.

Remember, God loves a seeking heart! (Matthew 7:7-12)  
And God loves you.

With Blessings and Prayers at Easter... and always!  
Kathryn Slattery

P.S. For more than 200 real-life questions about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, Christianity, Faith, Prayer (and much, much more!) you might enjoy my book, ***If I Could Ask God Anything: Awesome Bible Answers for Curious Kids***.

# Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

Many people understood and believed that Jesus truly was God's Son. They understood and believed what Jesus taught about God's great love for His children. But many others didn't. Some people thought Jesus was crazy. Others thought He was lying. Still others said it was against the law for Jesus to say that God was His Father.

So when Jesus was still a young man, just thirty-three years old, He was killed. Jesus was crucified, or put to death by hanging on a wooden cross. The word *crucify* means "to attach to a cross." It was a terrible, painful way to die (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19; Acts 2:23; Philippians 2:8).

Jesus was killed by fearful, angry people who didn't understand the things He said and did on earth. Jesus was killed by people who couldn't find it in their hearts to have faith in Him, and in His Father God.



# Did Jesus Know Ahead of Time That He Was Going to Die?

Several times Jesus told His disciples that He was going to die. But each time He mentioned His death, the disciples cried, “No! Don’t say such a thing!” Jesus also told His disciples ahead of time that He was going to rise from the dead. This was impossible for the disciples to understand (Matthew 17:22–23; 20:17–19; Mark 8:31–39; 9:30–32; 10:32–34; Luke 9:43–45; 18:31–34).

**Jesus told His disciples ahead of time about His death and resurrection for a special reason.**

It was so that when these things happened, the disciples would remember what Jesus said and would believe (Luke 24:8; John 14:29).



# **If Jesus Is God's Son, Why Didn't He Save Himself from Being Killed?**

Since Jesus is God's Son, He could have stopped the people from killing Him, but He didn't. This is because more than anything, Jesus wanted to be obedient to His Father God in heaven. Jesus was obedient because He loved and trusted God.

On the night before He was put to death, Jesus went to a garden called Gethsemane to pray. He was very sad and troubled. Jesus loved life. He did not want to die. Jesus fell with His face to the ground and cried out to God.

"Abba, Father," He said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36). When Jesus said, "Abba," He meant Daddy, or Papa. When Jesus said, "Take this cup," He meant that His death would be like drinking a cup of poison.

**Jesus chose to be obedient and do His Father's will.**

By choosing to be obedient and give up His life, Jesus took upon Himself the punishment for all the bad things people do and think (1 John 2:2).

**Jesus died to save everyone who would believe  
in Him. That is why He is called our Savior.**

# What Are the Seven Sayings of Jesus on the Cross?

When Jesus was on the cross, the four Gospels record Him saying seven sentences before He died. Jesus spoke to His mother. Jesus spoke to His disciples. Jesus spoke to a criminal who was being put to death on a cross next to Him. Jesus also spoke to His Father God.

Because Jesus was in great pain, facing death, and about to take upon Himself the sins of all human beings, these words reveal a lot about Jesus. They tell us what is important to Him. Over the years, these words have come to be known as the Seven Sayings of Jesus on the Cross.

## THEY ARE LISTED FOR YOU HERE.

1. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). Jesus said this to God about the soldiers at the bottom of the cross. The soldiers were casting lots to see who would get Jesus’ clothes after He died. Even on the cross, Jesus was loving and forgiving. Even on the cross, Jesus kept talking to His Father God.
2. “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Jesus said this to a criminal hanging on the cross next to Him. The criminal had recognized Jesus as God’s Son. Because the criminal believed in Jesus, Jesus forgave him for his sins. Jesus promised that when the criminal died, he would be with Jesus in paradise. When Jesus said “paradise,” He meant heaven.
3. “When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Dear woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother’” (John 19:26–27). Jesus loved His mother very much. He wanted to be sure that she would be taken care of after He died.

Jesus asked the disciple John to take care of Mary. John loved Jesus, and he took Mary to live with him in his home as though she were his own mother (see John 19:25–27).

4. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). Jesus said this to God during the terrible time He was taking all the sins of the world upon His human body. It was the time when Jesus felt totally cut off and separated from His Father God. It was the darkest, most horrible time in Jesus’ life.
5. “I am thirsty” (John 19:28). Jesus was God’s Son, but He was also human. The cross was a terrible way to die. Jesus was in great pain. Jesus was thirsty.
6. “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46). Jesus said this in a loud voice. Although Jesus suffered, He never stopped believing in God. He never stopped trusting God. Before Jesus died, He willingly gave God His spirit.
7. “It is finished” (John 19:30). Jesus died knowing He had been obedient to God’s will. With these words, Jesus completed His mission on earth. Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the whole world. Jesus died to save all who would believe in Him.

**Jesus died for me  
and for you.**

# What Happened to Jesus' Body?

One of Jesus' disciples was a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea. After Jesus was crucified, Joseph got permission from the Roman authorities to take and bury the lifeless body of Jesus.

Joseph and his friend Nicodemus wrapped Jesus' body in clean linen cloth. Between the strips of linen, they inserted fragrant spices. Then they laid Jesus' body gently in a tomb (Matthew 27:57–60; Mark 15:42–46; Luke 23: 50–53; John 19:38–42). Back then, a *tomb* was a small, dark room with a dirt floor, carved into rock.

Jesus' mother, Mary, was there. So was Mary Magdalene, another friend of Jesus'. After they laid Jesus' body in the tomb, Joseph rolled a big stone over the opening of the tomb (Matthew 27:57–61). And then—their hearts breaking with sorrow—they all walked away.

How shocked and sad people were on the day Jesus died! His mother and brothers and sisters and disciples all missed Him terribly. They cried and cried. *If only Jesus could somehow come back and be with us*, they thought. But that was impossible. Never again would they hear the sound of Jesus' laughter. Never again would they listen to His stories, or feel His big, strong hugs.

**Or so they thought . . .**



# What Was the Resurrection of Jesus?

Three days after Jesus died, early in the morning of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and Jesus' mother, Mary, set off to visit the tomb where Jesus' body had been laid. But when they arrived, the big stone that covered the opening to the tomb had been rolled away. The tomb was empty!

*Where has the body of our beloved Jesus gone?* the women wondered.

Moments later, they made a wonderful, important, extraordinary discovery: Jesus was *alive*! The tomb was empty because Jesus—in the most awesome, miraculous way—was no longer dead, *but had come back to life*!

As fast as their legs could carry them, Mary Magdalene and Mary ran to tell the disciples the good news.

**The word *resurrect* means “to bring back to life or raise from the dead.”**

Each of the four Gospels reports different, exciting details about Jesus' resurrection. For the most complete account of what happened when Jesus was resurrected, it's best to read all four Gospel reports (Matthew 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–18).

# Why Is Jesus' Resurrection So Important?

After Jesus' resurrection, He explained that soon He would be going back to heaven to live with His Father God. But before He left, He had some very good news.

Everyone leaned forward and listened carefully.

"The good news," said Jesus, "is that because I have come back to life, you can too. After you die, you can live forever with My Father God and Me in heaven. God loves you so much, He wants this for you. God wants you to believe in Him and Me. God wants to forgive your sins. God wants you to live in heaven forever" (see John 3:16). Jesus explained to His family and disciples that because they loved and believed in Him, after their life on earth ended, they would find themselves alive in heaven.

What a happy place heaven is! It's like a big birthday party. This is because everyone in heaven is happy and healthy. Everyone in heaven has new bodies that live forever, and there is no more death or sadness or crying or pain. In heaven, God will wipe away every tear from every eye (Revelation 7:17).

**The resurrection of Jesus is important because it means that our sins can be forgiven. Because you believe in Jesus, you can live forever with God and Jesus in heaven!**

# What Was the Ascension of Christ?

Jesus walked and talked on earth in His resurrected body for forty days. Then He gathered His disciples on the Mount of Olives near Bethany. The time had come for Jesus to join His Father God in heaven.

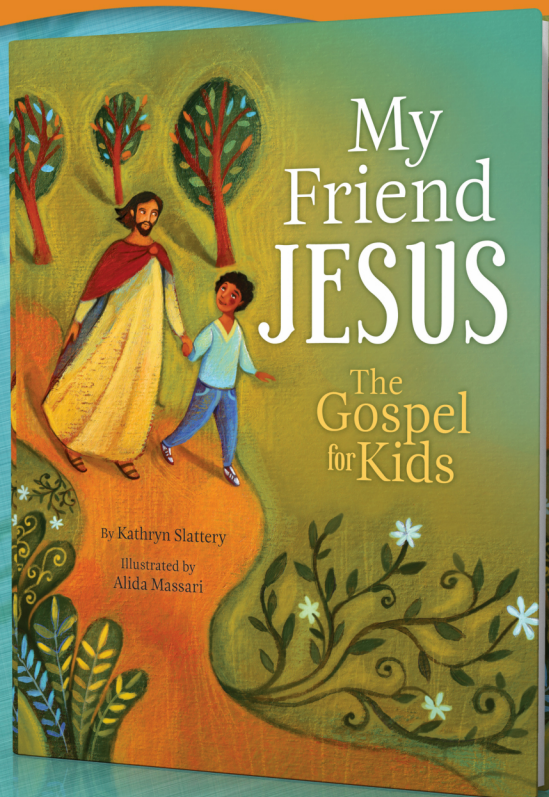
Before Jesus left the earth, He told the disciples to preach the good news of God's love to all creation (Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). He also told the disciples to stay in the city until they "received that power from heaven" (Luke 24:49 NCV). By "power from heaven," Jesus meant the arrival of the Holy Spirit. This would happen later in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1–4).

Then Jesus was "taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19).

**The word *ascension* means "the act of going up."**

As Jesus went up to heaven, the Bible says that a cloud hid Jesus from the disciples' sight (Acts 1:9).

# Also from Kathryn Slattery



**Jesus can be your friend and Savior!**

*My Friend Jesus* is written in fresh language that children can understand. The book not only tells the gospel story about Jesus, but also introduces children to a personal relationship with Him. A prayer at the end of the book guides children into that life-changing friendship with Jesus.

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