



Family Lenten Devotional

Lent is the season of the church year that is set apart for remembering Jesus' journey to the cross—His last supper, prayer in the garden, arrest, death, burial, and resurrection. It's through this slower-paced yearly walk through the events of Holy Week that helps us to appreciate, even more, Jesus' victory over death. In view of His suffering on our behalf, the glory of His resurrection shines all the brighter.

Traditionally, in Sunday School, children celebrate Palm Sunday one week, and then join in the celebration of Easter the next week. They go from celebration to celebration without fully understanding what Jesus has done for us between these two Sundays! It's our hope that these Family Devotions, along with our Journey to the Cross service (February 14 at 6:30 pm) and our Good Friday Kids' Session (March 29 at 12 noon) help our children to enter into a greater understanding of these central events of our faith.



Ash Wednesday – February 14

This year, Lent begins on Valentine’s Day. What a weird mash-up of sweet treats and red paper hearts mixed with ASHES—the sad reminder of Jesus’ suffering and death!

But, maybe there is a common thread between these two seemingly opposite celebrations? Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” The whole reason Jesus took this painful journey to the cross, in fact, the whole reason He was born in Bethlehem, is because of His love. He did not wait for us to be good enough to earn His love. Jesus took the first step, in fact *all the steps* to show us the extent of His love. His steps led Him all the way to the cross.

Join us at Eastbrook’s Journey to the Cross service tonight at 6:30 pm in the Worship Hall or online.

Week 1 – Sunday, February 18

Read: Psalm 1:1-3

Object Lesson – Green plant

Let your kids feel the plant leaves and stem. Talk about what the plant looks like, how it feels, using descriptive texture words.



Ask:

- Does this plant look healthy or weak to you? How can we know if a plant is healthy or not?
- What does a plant need in order to grow, to have green leaves, and maybe even bloom?
- In the Bible verses, we read about a tree that grew alongside a river. How do we know that this tree was healthy? (You may need to re-read verse 3.)

Explain: The tree in these verses is a picture of what God wants for each of His people – to grow strong, and to bear fruit! It doesn’t mean that we will suddenly grow apples from our arms or oranges on the top of our heads! It means that when love Jesus and stay close to Him, He will make us grow strong in our faith and “bloom” with good works!

Poster: Let your child draw a green plant in the “Week 1” square.

A Step Further: Help your kids to plant seeds in small indoor containers this week. Let your child place the container in a sunny window and water it regularly. Look for signs of growth and talk about how God desires His people to grow, too.

Week 2 – Sunday, February 25th

Read: John 15: 1-7

Object Lesson: paper or plastic straw; cup of colorful liquid; scissors

Have your child take the straw and place it into the colorful liquid. Take a sip of the beverage while watching the liquid travel up the straw and into their mouth. While the child is still sipping from the straw take the scissors and cut the straw above the liquid line but below the child's mouth.



Ask:

- How did having the straw make it easier to drink the liquid?
- What happened when the straw was cut? Which did you prefer?

Explain: Read these verses out loud:

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

As Jesus followers we want to be connected to Him and live our lives in a way that pleases Him. We want to know His truths so we can share them with others. We want to have the fruit of His Spirit like love, joy, peace and patience. When we are connected to Jesus, it is like drinking through the whole straw. We are given the water we need to live and grow. When we try to live on our own without following Jesus' plans, it is like trying to drink through a straw that has been cut in half—nothing refreshing will make it to our mouths!! Without this water we would wither and dry up!

Poster: Let your child draw glass of water with a straw in the Week 2 square.

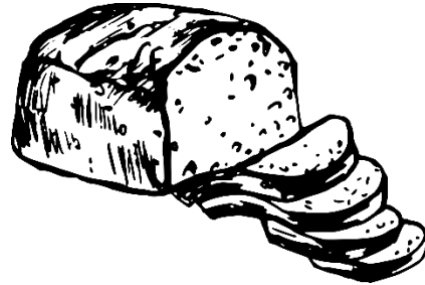
A Step Further: Talk about practical ways that you can stay connected to Jesus. Can you pick a time to pray together every day? Can you read a Bible story or a Psalm together?

Week 3 – Sunday, March 3

Read: Psalm 1:2; John 15: 3-7

Object Lesson: Favorite Family Meal or Really Delicious Bread

Prepare and eat a meal that is a family favorite or have a snack with a favorite bread covered in favorite toppings (butter, honey, jam, etc.)



Ask:

- What is your favorite part about this meal?
- Talk about nourishment (the food necessary for growth, health and good condition). What is nourishing about this meal?
- What does the psalmist say about the law of the Lord in Psalm 1:2?

Explain: The trunk of a tree or a grapevine provides water and nourishment to the branches. Without it, the branches cannot survive. Jesus uses the picture of a vine to tell us about our spiritual lives. Just like our physical bodies need nourishment, we need spiritual life from Jesus. We get this spiritual nourishment when we remain in Jesus through prayer, worship, reading the Bible and loving Him by obeying his commands. This spiritual nourishment is good for us, and it is a delight. Jesus loves us; he wants us to be with him, and he has good for us as we remain in him.

Poster: Let your child draw their favorite food in the “Week 3” square.

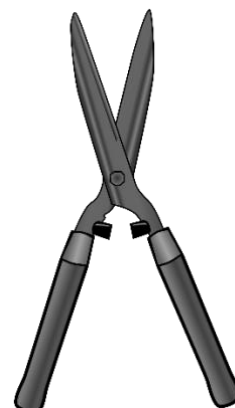
A Step Further: Find your family’s favorite worship music. Crank it up at home or in the car. Belt it out or dance it out with your kids as you worship Jesus together with delight.

Week 4 – Sunday, March 10

Read: John 15: 1-2; Psalm 1:3-4

Object Lesson: Gardening Shears (or scissors)

Let kids carefully examine the shears, maybe holding the handles with you, as you make a cutting motion. Explain what you use shears for in your own garden or yard. You could also bring in a dead, dry branch for kids to examine, noting its color, texture, and size. If you do this, ask kids to explain how they know it is a dead branch.



Ask:

- In the John 15:1-2 passage, who is the Gardener? Who is the Vine, and who are the branches?
- What are some ways that we show we are healthy “branches”?
- Why does the Gardener cut off the dead, dry branches?

Explain: Every gardener wants their garden to be full of healthy, green plants that bloom with flowers, vegetables, or fruit! Sometimes, branches wither—they get diseases or dry out. Gardeners “prune” (or cut away) these dead parts, so that the rest of the plant can be healthy and grow. As our good Gardener, God does the same for us. He wants to remove anything that, like a dead branch, is keeping us from growing healthy and strong for Him!

Poster: Let your child draw a pair of gardening shears in the “Week 4” square.

A Step Further: Take a walk outside, and note the plants you see along the way. Which show signs of life? Which look dead and brown? Some of our “dead” looking plants will become “alive” again as the days get longer and the sun warms them. This sign of spring reminds us of Jesus and His resurrection, which we’ll celebrate at the end of the month!

Week 5 – March 17

Read: John 15: 1-2; Psalm 1:3-4

Object Lesson: Bunches of grapes

Set out napkins for each member of the family. Pass the bunches of grapes to each member of the family, and let each person pick some grapes off the stem and eat them.



Ask:

- Name your favorite fruit. Does it grow on a vine, like grapes? Or, does it grow on a tree, or in a bush?
- What do you think farmers like to see when they walk in their fields or orchards?
- What do you think God likes to see in us?

Explain: Every farmer hopes that the fields or orchards will be overflowing with good fruit! This is how the farmer survives—not only by eating the fruit, but by having so much fruit that it can be sold to others!

Throughout the past few weeks, we’ve been talking about how God is a good gardener and we are His plants. God wants to us to be connected to Him, so that we receive spiritual nourishment, and we can grow strong to produce fruit – good words and actions. Plants don’t have to try hard to produce fruit—it happens naturally, as long as they are connected to their vines and getting good nourishment. This is true for us, too! If we stay connected to Jesus—talking with Him every day and reading His word—we will naturally produce lots of good fruit!

Poster: Let your child draw grapes (or other fruit) in the Week 5 square.

A Step Further: Challenge your family with this thought: If someone only heard your words and saw your actions, would they know that you are connected to Jesus?

Week 6 – March 24th Palm Sunday

Read: Psalm 1; John 15: 1 – 17 (John 12:12-54 for the triumphal entry of Jesus)

Object Lesson: Date palm tree and its branches (scientific drawing below)

Ask:

- Describe the parts of the date palm tree that you see in the scientific drawing (below) or your own picture.
- Psalm 1 says that we should not walk in step with the wicked. Did the people placing their cloaks and waving palms in the path of Jesus do what the psalm asks? Were they 'getting in step' with Jesus?
- Even if we do not have palm branches to wave, how can we honor Jesus and cry 'Hosana!' (*O save*) too?



Explain: Palm trees grew in groves around the Sea of Galilee and also as solo trees. All parts of the palm tree were used: crown for rope, dates for food, date seeds made into beads, leaves for roofing and the sides of houses. The trees were often 90 feet tall and the top, feathery leaves were 9 feet long.

The palm branches were known for showing triumph and victory. This did foretell Jesus' victory over sin and death, and therefore, a reconnection with God our Father. Probably not what the people were thinking when they waved the palms and put cloaks in the pathway, though!

Even as they did this to show that Jesus was their victor, it was Jesus who was following the path to lay down His whole life in order that we could triumph over sin/death. John 15:12-13 says "no greater love has one than to lay down their life for another."

Poster: Assist your child in drawing a palm branch.

Maundy Thursday – March 28

Mark 14:12-26

Do certain foods remind you of special times in your life? For example, birthdays or holidays?

The Last Supper, as we refer to it, was the Passover meal that Jesus ate with his close friends. They ate the Passover meal to remind them of their exodus from Egypt by God's hand. This meal called for bitter herbs to be used instead of a savory seasoning. The bitter herbs symbolized the difficulties of living under Pharaoh's oppressive rule (Exodus 1:14). Even the unleavened bread was a symbol of how quickly the Israelites needed to leave Egypt.

When Jesus shared this food and wine with his disciples, he spoke words that we remember when we have communion. He said, (vs. 24) "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,". Jesus was telling them of His upcoming sacrifice on the cross that would set us free from sin and death.

Good Friday – March 29

John 3:16

Have you ever planted an apple seed? When we bury an outwardly lifeless seed in the soil it is hard to picture how a beautiful tree can grow from a hard little pip. After his death on the cross, Jesus was buried in a tomb by his friend, Joseph of Arimathea. His followers and the disciples thought that his death was the end of his kingdom and the salvation he said he would bring. They did not understand that Jesus died on the cross to defeat sin and death and give new life to people who believe in him. In John 3:16, Jesus says, "For God so loved the world, He gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him will have eternal life." On Good Friday, we remember with sadness and repentance that Jesus died for our sins, but look forward with hope to the eternal life he gives to us.

Kids K5-Grade 4 can join us at for the Good Friday Kids' Session at 12 pm in the Little Theater. Families are also welcome at the Good Friday Services at 12 pm and 7 pm in the Worship Hall.

Holy Saturday

Mark 15:46-47; Hebrews 11:1

Jesus died on a Friday afternoon, and the very next day was the Sabbath day, a day of worship for God's people. So Friday evening, a faithful man named Joseph (not Jesus' earthly father, a different Joseph) took Jesus' body and placed it in a tomb. A huge stone was rolled in front of the tomb.

Then, you know what happened the next day, Saturday? Nothing!

For Jesus' friends, this must have been a very sad day. They thought they would never see Jesus again. But, we know better! We know that Jesus rose on the next day, the day we call Easter Sunday!

Like Jesus' friends, though, there is much that we still wait for. Our world is broken, and we too, lose some people we love. But, Holy Saturday reminds us to trust God's good plan! We can wait knowing that God will one day take us all to His kingdom where we will live forever. For now, it is quiet—like Holy Saturday. But we can count on the resurrection coming!

Easter Sunday – March 31

John 20:1-18

Have you ever run into someone you know, but then--you didn't even recognize them? Have you ever seen your teachers at a store, or a park, or anywhere outside of school? You barely recognize them because . . . well, you just weren't expecting to see them in *this place*!

That's what it must have been like for Mary. If you read John's version of the Easter story (John 20: 1-18), you see that Mary went to the tomb and found it empty. Someone began speaking to her. It was Jesus, but Mary didn't recognize Him! In fact, she thought He was a gardener—just there to water the plants or pull up the weeds! She didn't expect JESUS, who she saw die on the cross, to be in *this place*—walking around the garden tomb!

Isn't it amazing that the tomb—the place where Jesus was buried—was placed in a garden? A place filled with signs of life—green, growing plants, little bugs, flitting butterflies! The garden reminds us: Jesus died on the cross, but He is too powerful to stay dead. On Easter Sunday, we remember that Jesus rose from the dead and walked out of the tomb. And, because He led the way, we can know that someday, when we die, we won't stay dead either. Jesus was lead us into His forever kingdom!