

PROPHET PRIEST & KING



2024
Lenten Devotional



Ash Wednesday, February 14

When I was in college, my friend and roommate, Santiago, brought a group of us home from college for Easter break. His dad was Jewish, and believed in Jesus. While at their home, I had the honor of taking part in my first Seder dinner. His dad taught us about the significance of Jesus in the Seder. This began my journey of learning more about this sacred, ancient holiday.

Forty days from now (not counting Sundays), is when we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. They named it Lent. It is a word taken from the Old English word *lenchten*, which means spring season. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which has created an event called Fat Tuesday, because it was your chance to indulge before the 40 days of sacrifice of something that you gave up. The number forty is significant because it points back to the 40 days that Jesus went by Himself, out into the wilderness and was tempted by the devil.

We have a written history of Lent, existing around 325AD. It was a time of reflecting on the significance of this event that changed the entire course of history; the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In this season of reflecting on the life and death of the Messiah, I have set out to write a daily thought about what Jesus encouraged us to remember. Remember that right before He was betrayed, He took His disciples into an upper room and held a meal. This was very significant. We will explore not only why this mattered at the time, but how it demonstrates for the world the plan of salvation.

Take some time each day (not Sundays) to read, reflect, and apply the significant tie between the Exodus and the emphasis Jesus placed on this epic tale. I believe it will bring to life the importance of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

Sincerely,

Pastor Chad



Day 1 Thursday, February 15

Scripture

Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread arrived, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John ahead and said, "Go and prepare the Passover meal, so we can eat it together." -Luke 22:7-8

~~~~~

## Reflection

Since ancient times, the Passover meal was commanded to be eaten every year. History places the Exodus around 1300 years before the birth of Jesus. And since Jesus was Jewish, He likely celebrated this meal every year of His life. It was commanded. Most Jewish people still celebrate this meal today.

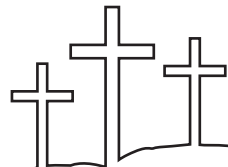
What is this meal? Jews refer to it as the Seder (say-der). This word means "order." The Seder is a series of readings and activities that go along with special food and wine during the most special night of the year. It occurs during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. This is one of the three main Holy Days that Jews are commanded to observe.

Why this meal is so important is because of the symbolism that so clearly points to what Jesus predicted was going to happen to Him. Jesus takes His disciples through the Seder, which tells the story of how God rescued His people out of slavery.

When Jesus gets to certain parts of the Seder, He says, "This is my body," and "This is my blood," which we have continued to honor in what we call "communion."

When we understand this meal, we more fully see the fulfillment of God's plan, to sacrifice His Son so that we might live eternally with Him, if we believe.

Take a moment to open your heart up to learning more about the life and teachings of Jesus and how the Bible can impact your life today.



## Day 2 Friday, February 16

*The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you." -Genesis 12:1-3*

~~~~~

One warm summer day, I was laying on some lush green grass with some friends and we were just chatting and looking up at the clear blue above. A nice breeze passed over our faces as we felt the cool earth on our backs. At some point, I saw a tiny speck in the sky. At first, I didn't think much about it, but I saw that it was getting bigger. I pointed it out to my friends. We were confused as to what it was. As it got bigger, it began to swirl and puff out. It was the start of a cloud. I had never considered that clouds had a beginning...until that day.

Spring is a season of new beginnings. Flowers burst out of the earth. Trees begin to make new leaves. The birds lay eggs. Creation.

In order to understand God's story, we need to go back to the beginning. After God created the heavens and the Earth, He created humans. After a while, He created a nation of people to call His own.

It started with a man named Abram (later called Abraham). God chose him to be the start of generations that would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. God predicts that Abram's descendants will live in slavery for 400 years in Egypt. (see Genesis 15)

After traveling to Egypt with his wife, they finally have a son at an old age. Then God tested Abram's faith and his obedience. God asks him to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abram takes Isaac and secretly goes up to the place where God commanded, and takes a knife and is willing to obey God. But as God saw his willingness to obey, He stops Abram and gives him a substitute. Abram looks and sees a ram caught in the thicket, to take the place of his son, Isaac.

Can you see the foreshadowing?

Take a moment to think back to when you first put your faith in God.

What were the circumstances? How did it make you feel?



Day 3 Saturday, February 17

"Your name will no longer be Jacob," the man told him. "From now on you will be called Israel, because you have fought with God and with men and have won."
-Genesis 32:28

~~~~~

I had a roommate in college who was one of my good friends. He was fascinating to me. Why? Because of his interesting background. His family was of Italian descent, but also Jewish. He grew up in Argentina and spoke Spanish as his first language. Then, his dad became a Christian and moved to the US, to bring the message of Jesus to Jewish people in Massachusetts. They attended a Baptist church. It was difficult to label him.

Abraham has a son named Isaac. Then Isaac has a son named Jacob. In Genesis 32, Jacob has a very strange occurrence. While camping at night, Jacob is visited by God. God wrestles Jacob all night long and won't give up.

Have you ever wrestled with God? Of course you have! You are joining a long history of that back and forth that God expects to have with you. God wrestled with Jacob in the night and then He changed Jacob's name to Israel. Does that name sound familiar?

An entire nation was created through this one man. Jacob proceeded to have 12 sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel. Through bloodlines and tying themselves to a family, the identity of a nation is born.

What makes up your identity? Is it your family? Is it where you were born? Your occupation? Your friends? How does that change when you become a member of the family of God? Take a moment to explore the word identity, and what it means to find your identity in Christ.



## Day 4 Monday, February 19

*Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. Then he had Joseph ride in the chariot reserved for his second-in-command. And wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, "Kneel down!" So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all Egypt. And Pharaoh said to him, "I am Pharaoh, but no one will lift a hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval." -Genesis 41:41-44*

~~~~~

When my wife, Erin, and I lived in Mexico, we found ourselves to be different, obviously. We spoke English and we were learning slowly to speak Spanish. We had different colored skin and different colored hair. Even more than that, we found that our experiences growing up were very different from what we learned from our new friends. It really opened our eyes to the richness of God's creation and how we take for granted how we are shaped into a culture.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is the story of Joseph. It has everything. Pride. Deception. Betrayal. Being framed. Innocent imprisonment. And a happy ending.

I encourage you to read it. (Genesis 37-50) Notice the geography. Abraham left for Egypt and then returned to the Land of Canaan. Then Jacob is in the Land of Canaan and his sons sell Joseph, his favorite son, who then lands in Egypt. Through drought and the fact that God was with Joseph, Jacob and his 12 sons and their families also settled in the land of Egypt.

Not only that, Joseph is the second in command. Through this position in society, we see the Israelites go and be fruitful and multiply. It's important to remember that they kept their identity. There was a difference between them and the Egyptians. One God. One family. Unified by customs and culture. They prospered in the land, living peacefully with the Egyptians.

God uses cultural differences to help us understand ourselves, and this helps us to understand more about God.

How have you been shaped into the person that you are now? How did where you grew up, or if you moved, shape your identity, and how you view life? Was it positive or negative?



Day 5 Tuesday, February 20

They made their lives bitter, forcing them to mix mortar and make bricks and do all the work in the fields. They were ruthless in all their demands. -Exodus 1:14

~~~~~

After living peacefully in the land of Egypt for many years, a new Pharaoh takes over. The memory of God working through Joseph to survive the famine, and to prosper Egypt, was forgotten. The new Pharaoh senses that the Israelites living with them would soon overtake Egypt. So he uses his power to make the Israelites slaves.

They put them to work and make them build the pyramids. When you participate in the Seder meal, one of the foods you eat is called Charoset. It is apples cut up in cubes, and you combine that with crushed almonds and sugar, to signify the brick and mortar that they used to build for the Egyptians.

Notice the imagery of the situation. The Israelites live among the world of the Egyptians, and then the Egyptians turn on them.

So it is with sin. We get tempted into the deceitful promises of the world, and then we find ourselves enslaved. For the addict, it starts out as a decision, but then they become enslaved. For the gambler, it starts out with the gambler in control. At some point, they lose control.

The Israelites lived in slavery for over 400 years. It was ruthless. The Egyptians were harsh. They needed to be rescued.

Sometimes it's hard to imagine what it would be like to be a slave. What does it mean to be a slave? What does it mean to be free? Write down some words that describe each.



## Day 6 Wednesday, February 21

*Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground." -Genesis 1:28*

~~~~~

But their descendants, the Israelites, had many children and grandchildren. In fact, they multiplied so greatly that they became extremely powerful and filled the land. -Exodus 1:7

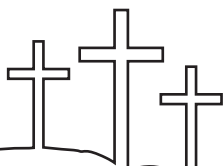
I remember the day I met my daughter like it was yesterday. It was 12 years ago. There was a sacredness to the occasion because God brought life into the world. I was so scared and out of control, and yet hopeful. Her eyes shined at me and I instantly fell in love. But then, we were sent home. What do we do now? It was intense, but we figured it out.

From the beginning, God brought His plan into the world for humans to go and fill the earth with children and to go and be fruitful and multiply. We see this again in Exodus. God has established himself as the head of the family. The Israelites are now identified by the One true God and are asked to keep their identity and to reproduce.

What a great word. Fruitful. It reminds me of the orange tree we had up in our yard. Each year, the tree would bloom in the spring (orange blossoms are my favorite scent in the world). Then they build green spheres through the year. Somehow, by the end of the year, there would be the sweetest, and juiciest fruit.

The Israelites thrived in slavery. They became powerful even though they were living in oppression. This is a good reminder for us. God understands that we all go through difficult times, but He also knows that this produces the characteristics that He is looking for. Patience. Endurance. And most importantly, dependence on Him.

Take a moment to reflect back on some of the difficult times that you went through. What do you think it produced in you?



Day 7 Thursday, February 22

Then Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, gave this order to the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah: "When you help the Hebrew women as they give birth, watch as they deliver. If the baby is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live." But because the midwives feared God, they refused to obey the king's orders. They allowed the boys to live, too. -Exodus 1:15-17

~~~~~

Something happens to people when they feel threatened. They get nasty. This happened to the Pharaoh. He orders the midwives to kill all of the baby boys. I find it interesting that the Hebrew women were placed in charge of childbirth. I also find it interesting that they completely go against the commands of the Pharaoh.

These two observations are connected. The whole process of birth is connected to God's plan of bringing life. That is what God is all about! The midwives were identified by the Egyptians as better at bringing life. Then of course when they were asked to kill the boys, they risked their own lives to save the baby boys.

I think we must pause here and look at what happens at the time of the birth of Jesus. King Herod is threatened. He gets nasty. He commands his army to kill all of the boys two years of age and younger, just to make sure that no "baby king" could come and take his throne. God commands Mary and Joseph to escape to Egypt so that Jesus isn't killed.

Power and life.

Too often in history, we see regimes come to power by killing the enemy. The power that is achieved comes from people that are so scared to lose their lives that they kill others in battle.

Back to Egypt.

Pharaoh is trying to suppress the Hebrews by having the midwives kill the boys. This sets the stage for more oppression and the need for freedom. It is about to get worse.

Take a moment to consider how God's definition of power is different from how humans seek and define power. How would you define power?



## Day 8 Friday, February 23

*Later, when the boy was older, his mother brought him back to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him as her own son. The princess named him Moses, for she explained, "I lifted him out of the water." -Exodus 2:10*

~~~~~

Two slaves had a son. Pharaoh was threatened. The mother could see that this child was special. So she hid him.

That must have felt terrible. Each time a soldier walked by, or if a neighbor looked at you suspiciously, you would panic. You didn't have any options. No control.

So this mother, out of desperation, makes a plan. She sends her son down the Nile river in a basket, hoping that someone with power and status would protect him.

And it works!

Not only does it work, but they convince the daughter of Pharaoh to give the child back to his mother to nurse him until the princess adopts him.

I have always pictured Moses with the image of Charleton Heston with his long beard, robe and staff. But one day it dawned on me. Moses was brought up as an Egyptian. His name came from the princess. He was educated in the castle. He ate the finest foods. He had power. He probably wore Egyptian clothes and possibly...makeup?

Why does this matter? Because Moses remembers who his people are, even though he was taken care of. He remembers that he is from a family and he sees what is happening to his people from a completely different perspective. I guess that is what makes him special. What a powerful image that his name means to be lifted out of the water!

When you think of Moses, what images or words do you usually associate with him? Write down some ways that Egyptians in power were raised versus Hebrews, who were enslaved.



Day 9 Saturday, February 24

Many years later, when Moses had grown up, he went out to visit his own people, the Hebrews, and he saw how hard they were forced to work. During his visit, he saw an Egyptian beating one of his fellow Hebrews. After looking in all directions to make sure no one was watching, Moses killed the Egyptian and hid the body in the sand. -Exodus 2:11-12

~~~~~

Injustice.

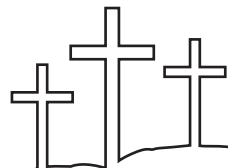
God doesn't like it. In this passage, Moses leaves his place of comfort in the royal palace and sees his people and how they are treated. He responds. He can't help it. In an effort to save the life of one of his people, he kills an Egyptian.

Some people call Moses a murderer. I don't. I call him a hero. Moses is not concerned about the value of this slave's status or his worth. Moses just sees the injustice. He tries not to get caught. Why? Because Moses understands that in his culture, you are legally able to treat slaves poorly. And you definitely can't do anything to an Egyptian.

Moses is stuck.

He thinks he did this without anyone noticing. But he was caught. Rumors start to fly and he needs to get out of town. Moses leaves his people and he leaves his royal home because he was not safe.

Have you ever done something for the right reasons, but then got in trouble? How does that feel? Why would God do this to Moses? Write down some positive results from this event.



## Day 10 Monday, February 26

*Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.” -Exodus 3:10*

~~~~~

I once took a trip with my church to Nairobi, Kenya. I was excited for the adventure. I packed my bags and boarded a 747 jet and flew the long journey to a new continent. When we were about to land, I realized something embarrassing. I didn't have any idea of what Kenya would look like. My only impression was built from the little imaging that I received and it was merely from National Geographic. I accidentally pictured our plane landing in a grassland with wildebeest marching and Masai people, wearing red shawls, waiting for our arrival.

Boy, was I wrong. I learned so much about Kenya and the people living there. We traveled to the beautiful areas of the country and saw giraffes and zebras on the side of the road. But we also ate at the Hard Rock Cafe in downtown Nairobi.

As I reflect back on that trip, I see how learning another culture helped me to learn more about myself. It's important for us to be able to take a look at our lives from an objective space.

This happened to Moses. He gets sent out to the wilderness and he finds himself shepherding for his new father-in-law. This is the place where God calls him.

As Moses leaves the comforts of his palatial home, and he leaves his people who were enslaved, he gets a new perspective. He is now an outsider looking back at Egypt and able to see his people enslaved. God calls him to go back and obediently lead God's people out of Egypt.

Why Moses? Remember that Moses is an Israelite. Don't forget that he was passionate about injustice. And be mindful that Moses was raised in the royal household.

Isn't that amazing? God was equipping Moses long before he called Moses into action. As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us that God was knitting us in our mother's wombs. So why do we doubt that God doesn't know what He is doing when He calls us into His mission and purpose?

God is calling you to trust and obey Him. Where is God asking you to go? How has he equipped you to accomplish this mission? Take a moment to write a message to God. Be honest.



Day 11 Tuesday, February 27

God replied to Moses, “I am who i am. Say this to the people of Israel: I am has sent me to you.” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.

This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations.

-Exodus 3:14-15

~~~~~

When I was in middle school, I took Spanish as my language. The first thing we learned was the two verbs, “ser” and “estar.” They both mean “to be.” In Spanish, these two verbs help to explain the differences in the word, “is.”

In English, we have different ways of saying “is.” It can be “was,” “am,” or “are.” It all depends on the subject and the timing. In essence, the verb is what we use to describe existence. Another way to say that, is life.

This is a bold statement. God gives Moses language that points back to their ancestry and to the Creator of life. This is still powerful today. We frequently use language to describe existence.

Jesus uses this language. He claims in John 14:6, “I AM the way, and the truth and the life.” This is another sign of how God was at work in the Exodus, in the same way that Jesus was called to bring the New Covenant.

This name of God is the ultimate name that says that there is no other God. This claim separates the Egyptians from the Israelites, and is setting the stage for an epic showdown between these two belief systems.

When we pause and dwell on the God who created our existence, it helps us understand more about who we are. Take a moment to worship God by saying His name while breathing and quieting your soul. Write down some words that come to your mind from this.



## Day 12 Wednesday, February 28

*Then Moses and Aaron returned to Egypt and called all the elders of Israel together. Aaron told them everything the Lord had told Moses, and Moses performed the miraculous signs as they watched. Then the people of Israel were convinced that the Lord had sent Moses and Aaron. When they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped. -Exodus 4:29-31*

~~~~~

Moses pleads with God to have his brother speak for him. God tells Aaron this and they form a partnership. As Moses returns to Egypt, he calls the leaders together and tells them that God is going to set them free.

Can you imagine? Some guy that had been living out in the wilderness comes back and claims that he had heard from God to return, take over leadership from the elders, and to lead people out of slavery!

How would you react?

Luckily, God listened to Moses and had him prepared. Moses took his staff and threw it on the ground and it turned into a snake. Then he picked it up and it became a snake again. Then, he put his hand into his robe and it instantly was covered with leprosy. He put it in again and it was healed.

They were amazed. All of the doubt quickly turned into a realization that what Moses was saying was true.

Then, they were hit with a realization that God had heard their prayers and that action was going to happen. The excitement sets in. God not only heard their prayers, but He determined the time was now.

They bow and worship God and are overwhelmed with joy.

Take a moment to pray to God and ask Him for something that seems impossible. Write it down. Remember to check back on this and see how God responds.



Day 13 Thursday, February 29

After this presentation to Israel's leaders, Moses and Aaron went and spoke to Pharaoh. They told him, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go so they may hold a festival in my honor in the wilderness."

"Is that so?" retorted Pharaoh. "And who is the Lord? Why should I listen to him and let Israel go? I don't know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go."

-Exodus 5:1-2

~~~~~

What do we know about Pharaoh? We don't know much. But we don't have to. He is like anyone else. Moses and Aaron ask Pharaoh to let the slaves go.

So he thinks about it. "Should I let the slaves go that do all the work for us and then just give them resources to send them on their way? Hmmm, no! Of course, not!"

Pharaoh is not impressed with the request. As a matter of fact, it angers him. He accuses the Israelites of being lazy and makes them work harder and with less supplies.

This paints a realistic picture about life. When we follow God, His ways are different than our ways. We end up going against culture and that will definitely produce resistance.

But don't give up hope. This is part of the process. God is still at work. Just remember the goal, and keep praying.

In the past, have you given up hope when you face resistance? How can you resist that temptation? Take a moment to write a plan to overcome the temptation to quit before God has finished His plan.



## Day 14 Friday, March 1

*“Therefore, say to the people of Israel: ‘I am the Lord. I will free you from your oppression and will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment. I will claim you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God who has freed you from your oppression in Egypt. I will bring you into the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will give it to you as your very own possession. I am the Lord!’”*

*-Exodus 6:6-8*

~~~~~

In this passage, there are four promises that God makes while the Israelites are still in Egypt. You might miss it, but these are critical to understanding the Passover Seder meal that helps us to remember the Exodus.

In a Seder, which means order, you go through a long process of steps and it is stamped by 4 cups of wine. These 4 cups bring us back to this verse.

1. I will free you from oppression
2. I will rescue you from slavery
3. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment
4. I will claim you as my own people

We will look more closely at each cup in upcoming entries of this devotional. Until then, we see the plan of God that is a process of getting out of slavery and into a better life.

Notice the line, “then you will know.” Many times in life, we take credit for things that God has done. We explain it away or forget that we even prayed for an outcome that God has given to us. As a result, God doesn’t get the credit he deserves.

Remember this when you are confused about the ways of the Lord. Sometimes, because of our stubbornness, God has to do things His way, so that we remember to acknowledge Him. He wants us to include Him, not just for a little while, but for forever.

Take a moment to read through these promises. Write down some promises that God has impressed upon you in the past and in the present.



Day 15, Saturday, March 2

So Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord commanded them. As Pharaoh and all of his officials watched, Aaron raised his staff and struck the water of the Nile. Suddenly, the whole river turned to blood! -Exodus 7:20

~~~~~

As Moses and Aaron confront Pharaoh, they are met with resistance. This makes sense. Why would Pharaoh want to give up his power and control. So God sends down ten plagues. The first one was turning the Nile River into blood.

There are many theories about why God needed to send plagues. Some scholars believe that God was taking on the polytheistic thinking of the Egyptians. Some believe that it was just what needed to be done to pry the control away from Pharaoh. Still others postulate that the condition of Pharaoh's heart plays a role in the number ten.

We really don't know. So we focus on what we do know. This first plague is so vivid. Can you imagine a vibrant river turning to blood. The bible goes on to say how devastating this was because it killed every living being in the river. It destroyed the vegetation around it that depended on water from the river.

The Nile River was critical to Egypt. God shows how He is more powerful than the source of the water.

But then something strange happens. Pharaoh's magicians are somehow able to recreate this plague by using their own magic. This is confusing to me. How did they do this? Does this mean that other magic exists?

I will leave this up to you to decide. What we do know is that God gets resistance in everything that He does. He is not surprised by this. Rather, it is part of His plan.

What do you think is the reason that God sent this plague? What does it make you think of in your life?



## Day 16 Monday, March 4

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will strike Pharaoh and the land of Egypt with one more blow. After that, Pharaoh will let you leave this country. In fact, he will be so eager to get rid of you that he will force you all to leave."  
-Exodus 11:1*

~~~~~

The other day, I asked my daughter to clean her room. She was quiet for a while and I was very impressed. Then someone rang the doorbell. It was two of her friends. They said hi and walked into her room. It was quiet again. So I knocked on her door. They let me enter. Her room was a mess! And her friends were sitting on the mess and talking.

I took my daughter quietly out of her room and asked her why she didn't clean her room.

She told me that she absolutely loved what I said. She meditated on what I said and then invited her friends over to talk about what I said. They were trying to memorize what I said when I knocked on the door.

But her room wasn't clean.

Ok, so I made that up. But do you see the point? The point of Scripture is not to read, meditate and memorize. The purpose is for us to actually DO what the Bible says.

How loud does God have to be to get your attention? Are you able to hear God's small, still voice and even more, are you quick to obey?

For Pharaoh, it took ten plagues to get his attention. Then he responded. He was so glad to get rid of the Israelites that he forced them out!

Sometimes we question God's actions. We are so confused as to why He does what He does and why He isn't more direct, or more gentle. But when you look at it from His point of view, you see a God who is ignored except when we need help. You see God screaming at us, and we complain that He never speaks.

Take a moment to sit still before the Lord. Now invite Him to speak to you. Next, make a list of what He is asking you to do. Now go and do it!



Day 17 Tuesday, March 5

When the time came, Jesus and the apostles sat down together at the table. Jesus said, "I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins. For I tell you now that I won't eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." -Luke 22:14-16

~~~~~

When Jesus takes His disciples into the upper room, He shares the Passover meal with them. In this annual tradition, the head of the household leads the guests through a series of rituals.

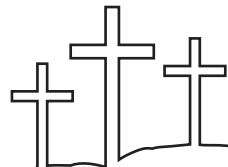
One of these rituals is to remember the ten plagues. Each person takes the second cup and dips their pinky into the cup of wine and with each plague, they declare the plague, and dot their plate with the wine. "Blood," "frogs," "gnats," "flies," death of livestock," "boils," "hail," "locusts," "darkness," "death of firstborn sons."

Imagine this scene. Jesus remembering the acts of God with his disciples. As they finish, they reflect on this ritual that they have done each Passover. Jesus is retelling the story of the Exodus as the last thing that He does with His disciples.

Jesus does this on the night on which He is betrayed. He does this on the night before He is put on trial and declared innocent. He does this on the night before He is beaten and killed.

There must be more to this. Jesus taught His disciples to remember Him every time they eat this meal.

How does the story of the Exodus come to life for you when you think of Jesus telling this story to His disciples in the upper room? Write down your thoughts on why God sent ten plagues to set free the Israelites from slavery.



## Day 18 Wednesday, March 6

*While the Israelites were still in the land of Egypt, the Lord gave the following instructions to Moses and Aaron: "From now on, this month will be the first month of the year for you. Announce to the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for a sacrifice, one animal for each household."*

*-Exodus 12:1-3*

~~~~~

The first Passover meal happened while the Hebrews were still in Egypt. This ancient ritual was commanded to sacrifice a lamb and place the blood on the doorway. Upon seeing the blood, the angel of death would "pass over" that household and the firstborn son would then be spared.

Fast forward ahead to about 1400 years and we find Jesus repeating this command as He is about to allow himself to be sacrificed. John the Baptist declared Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (see John 1:29)

Jesus, knowing this significance, takes His disciples and has one final meal with them. He goes through all of the rituals that symbolize the Exodus and then they eat a lamb. It's important for us to realize that in order to receive the protection from the angel of death, God commands His people to actively take part in the process.

What a great start to a tradition! A meal that satisfies the two requirements of using the blood of the lamb to cover the doorway, and the body of the lamb to feed the celebration.

To truly honor this celebration, it is important for us to recognize the severity of this first occasion, because death was on the line.

When you prepare for Easter, what helps you to imagine what it was like in biblical times? What can you do this year to understand why this tradition is so important? Make a list of things you are going to try this year.



Day 19 Thursday, March 7

And that night at midnight, the Lord struck down all the firstborn sons in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sat on his throne, to the firstborn son of the prisoner in the dungeon. Even the firstborn of their livestock were killed. Pharaoh and all his officials and all the people of Egypt woke up during the night, and loud wailing was heard throughout the land of Egypt. There was not a single house where someone had not died. -Exodus 12:29-30

~~~~~

Loud wailing.

Grief.

Pain.

It motivates like no other force. God warned. God gave many chances to avoid the pain. God even gave a chance to anyone who would listen to place blood on their door frame so the angel of death would pass them over.

Death is inevitable.

God wants us to know that we are dealing with life and death. We need to know that God doesn't want death. He gives us many chances to escape its grip. Instead, God wants us to follow Him into Eternal Life.

The story of the Passover deals with the reality of death. Where there is life, there is death. Just like where there is light, there is darkness.

When we lose someone we love, we feel pain. We feel the loss. Our lives are never the same. It is because of the great gift of life, given to that person, that creates the opportunity for us to love.

If we only focus on the positive things, we forget about the opposite. If we forget about the opposite, we become naive to the reality that when death grips us, we need a Savior.

Take a moment to celebrate those whom you have loved and lost. Can you see both? Write down how those people changed your life.



## Day 20 Friday, March 8

*Then Moses called all the elders of Israel together and said to them, "Go, pick out a lamb or young goat for each of your families, and slaughter the Passover animal. Drain the blood into a basin. Then take a bundle of hyssop branches and dip it into the blood. Brush the hyssop across the top and sides of the doorframes of your houses. And no one may go out through the door until morning. -Exodus 12:21-22*

~~~~~

Hopefully, the last nine plagues had got the attention of the Israelites. Hopefully, when Moses spoke, they obeyed. Because on that night, the angel of death was to visit each home, and it didn't matter who was inside, it only mattered if the blood of the lamb was on the door frame.

Do you understand this significance? Moses relays this message to the people of Israel. Go inside. Stay there. And paint the door frame of your house with the blood of the lamb.

That begs the question. Did some Israelites not obey this command? Did some cling so tightly to the customs of Egypt that they missed the message? And maybe some Egyptians heard the message and started to understand the plan of God. Were they saved?

The evidence in Scripture states that if you had the blood of the slaughtered lamb on your door, you were spared. That's it.

Jesus teaches us to not miss His message. He teaches us to follow Him with all of our lives and to truly surrender. If we don't, then we might not be ready to obey when our lives are on the line.

Sometimes God asks us to follow Him in small, seemingly insignificant ways. But when we look back, He was guiding us into life in ways that we didn't even understand at the time.

Take some time to assess your level of obedience to God. Are you willing to follow, even in the small things? Write down some ways that God is asking you to trust and obey Him.



Day 21 Saturday, March 9

So all the people of Israel followed all the Lord's commands to Moses and Aaron. On that very day the Lord brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt like an army. -Exodus 12:50-51

~~~~~

That night, Pharaoh commanded the Israelites to leave. The Egyptians had had enough. They were afraid they would all die if they kept the Hebrews as their slaves.

Can you imagine that? For generations, your people were enslaved. Then God chose to act. God called Moses and Aaron to represent God and they claimed all of these strange occurrences.

And it worked!

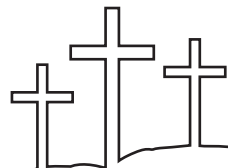
You were now heading out of town as an army. Not only that, but God commanded the people of Israel to ask the Egyptians for their possessions. According to Scripture, the Egyptians really respected the Israelites and were glad to give them a parting gift.

Sometimes we have things in our lives that seem impossible. Everything we have tried didn't work. Then we give it to God and then He orchestrates a miracle!

This is very challenging. Most of our lives we try to live by the rules of earth. We build a relationship with our actions leading to direct consequences. This happens whether it is good or when it is not good.

But then God enters the situation. He does something very different than what we expect. His ways are always bigger. Obviously, but sometimes we resist this because it doesn't make sense to our common sense.

Take some time to think about how you resist God's plans. Our wills can sometimes get so stubborn, that we prevent God from leading us into life-giving freedom. What would it feel like to be set free?



## Day 22 Saturday, March 9

*For seven days the bread you eat must be made without yeast. Then on the seventh day, celebrate a feast to the Lord. -Exodus 13:6*

~~~~~

There are three main festivals that Jewish people observe every year. The Festival of Unleavened Bread in the spring. The Festival of Weeks in the summer. And the Festival of Booths in the fall.

If you look at the gospels, you see Jesus avoiding Jerusalem because it is too dangerous. He says that His time had not yet come. But then, He willingly takes His disciples and heads into the temple.

Do not miss the fact that He does this during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. God had planned this from the beginning. Jesus enters this Festival that commemorates the Exodus. They celebrated the rapid exit from Egypt.

The Hebrew word for yeast or leaven is chametz. When you let bread sit for a while, the yeast infiltrates and spreads to the dough. Jesus tells us to beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. This language alludes to sin and how it spreads.

But what happens when you cook dough right away? It is more like a cracker. In this Festival, this is what they ate. They call it matzah.

This weeklong event is built on the memory of the quick exit. They take a break from eating bread with yeast in it and make different foods like matzah ball soup. Yum!

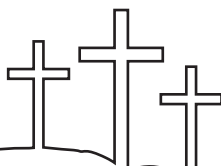
Then, as an annual tradition, they take a flawless lamb and sacrifice it for the entire nation of Israel. This Passover Lamb reminds the people of the great event from God, when the blood of the lamb saved His people.

Jesus knows that He is going to be sacrificed. It was His mission. He takes His disciples during this Festival into the upper room to remember the Exodus. He gives His disciples some final instructions and understands that Judas has begun the process through his betrayal.

When we understand this context, we recognize the importance of this symbolism and why Jesus takes His disciples through this meal one last time.

What implications does this have on your understanding of the gospels?

Write down some of your thoughts on yeast and how this image helps your understanding of sin and sacrifice.



Day 23 Monday, March 11

When Pharaoh finally let the people go, God did not lead them along the main road that runs through Philistine territory, even though that was the shortest route to the Promised Land. God said, "If the people are faced with a battle, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." -Exodus 13:17

~~~~~

Being set free from slavery is not the end of the story. God understood that leaving what you know, can sometimes drive you back to what you know... even if it was slavery.

This is true in life. When we are set free from sin, we are beginning the journey, not ending it.

This makes us ponder what is the true definition of freedom. Most people think that freedom is "doing what I want." But is it? I personally am glad that people I know are not free to steal from me. I am glad that it is illegal to murder. I am even glad that there are stop lights so that I am able to enter a road without someone freely crashing into me.

When you think about freedom from the aspect of community, we see that freedom is more complicated. We can't be free if we are oppressed. When people are free to do what they want, then someone inevitably comes in to oppress them, through violence, and steal other people's rights for their gain.

God understands this. He doesn't take His people directly into the Promised Land. Instead He leads them into the wilderness to train and create a new identity for the people of Israel. This new identity needs to shed the old one, of being a slave. The new identity is discovered through faith, in the wilderness.

Take a moment and meditate on the word freedom. Write down how you would define it.



## Day 24 Tuesday, March 12

*When word reached the king of Egypt that the Israelites had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds. "What have we done, letting all those Israelite slaves get away?" they asked. -Exodus 14:5*

~~~~~

Escaping slavery is not easy. Even if you get permission to leave. Pharaoh was in the moment when he was ridding his country of the Israelites.

Then he recognized the economic implications. He also probably realized that he looked quite weak.

So he responds. Pharaoh sends his chariots and army to chase after the Israelites with orders to kill and destroy.

Slavery doesn't want to let you go. It grips you. It oppresses you. It follows you.

When we think about slavery, we must consider how God uses this image to illustrate the grip that sin puts on our lives. We get tempted into wrongdoing. We experience the euphoria of rebellion and the instant gratification. Then we miss the claws that grasp us. Soon, the deceit wears off and we are left with the chains that enslave us.

Jesus warns us of this. Then, when we try to escape, that temptation follows us and tries to convince us to return.

Write down a time in your life when you saw someone try to escape from the sins that were holding them down, and they found it challenging to continue their escape.



Day 25 Wednesday, March 13

As Pharaoh approached, the people of Israel looked up and panicked when they saw the Egyptians overtaking them. They cried out to the Lord, and they said to Moses, "Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren't there enough graves for us in Egypt? What have you done to us? Why did you make us leave Egypt? Didn't we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? We said, 'Leave us alone! Let us be slaves to the Egyptians. It's better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness!'" -Exodus 14:10-12

~~~~~

The Israelites escaped in mass and God led them to the Red Sea. The place that I believe they settled was through a rugged path that led to the water. There were mountains to the north, and rocks to the south. The only apparent option was to return the way they came, but that is when Pharaoh's army approached. There was no escape.

In anguish, the Israelites realize their doom and start to criticize Moses.

Do you do the same thing? I know I do. Before God can finish what He started, I doubt. I abandon His plan. I get impatient. I criticize anyone who will listen.

How silly is this? The Israelites have already seen so many miracles! They've seen Moses' stick turn into a snake. They've seen God turn the Nile River into blood. They've seen Pharaoh bless their exit from slavery and the Egyptians give them going away gifts.

But they still doubt.

If we really have faith in God, we have to have faith all the way until the end. Another miracle just might happen.

Take a moment and commit to God to have faith in Him all the way until the end. Write down some new prayers or consider some older prayers where you are still waiting for God to act.



## Day 26 Thursday, March 14

*Then Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the Lord opened up a path through the water with a strong east wind. The wind blew all that night, turning the seabed into dry land. So the people of Israel walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on each side!*

*-Exodus 14:21-22*

~~~~~

No path to the north, water to the east, no path to the south, and an army set to destroy you to the west.

No escape.

Or so they thought.

Many people know about this story. Moses stands at the base of the Red Sea and trusts God to perform a miracle. God delivers.

With God providing defense from between them and the Egyptians, a path is made through the raging sea. God's people hurry through the dry ground to the other side.

This is an important reminder to all of us. When we have faith in God, He will set us free from sin. But when temptation and doubt return, God is still with us. He doesn't leave us. Even when it seems like there is no escape. God is with you, and provides a way for you to escape.

Take a moment to remember a time when it seemed like there was no way out of your situation. How did God make it happen? Did you give Him the credit?



Day 27 Friday, March 15

So as the sun began to rise, Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the water rushed back into its usual place. The Egyptians tried to escape, but the Lord swept them into the sea. Then the waters returned and covered all the chariots and charioteers—the entire army of Pharaoh. Of all the Egyptians who had chased the Israelites into the sea, not a single one survived. -Exodus 14:27-28

~~~~~

This epic tale continues. God knows that the Egyptians won't just let their slaves go without having second thoughts. Pharaoh's heart is once again hardened. This is a common theme as we read about Pharaoh. Then, he once again gets nasty. He sends his well-equipped army with his chariots and orders them to kill the Israelites.

As we see, this is their undoing. They follow the Israelites into the split in the sea, and they are still in the middle when Moses is commanded to call on the sea to return, which closes the Egyptians into their watery deaths.

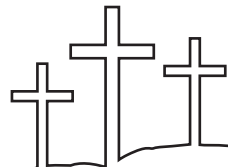
God trapped them.

Not only did they escape slavery, but God took away their fears of an army ever coming after them. The Red Sea separated them, and the army was destroyed.

Sometimes we ask God for something, and oftentimes He doesn't just answer the prayer, He exceeds our expectations. God takes advantage of the situation to complete the goal that He had. He is always aware of the big picture. He always has the ability to see other factors involved.

Let's be reminded of the perspective that God has, when we go into prayer. Humble yourself before the Lord and make your requests known. Then trust Him to answer accordingly.

Take a moment to remember all that God is dealing with. Write down some prayers and then give it to Him to handle. Then begin to trust in Him and watch Him work.



## Day 28 Saturday, March 16

*Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord:*

*"I will sing to the Lord,  
for he has triumphed gloriously;  
he has hurled both horse and rider  
into the sea.*

*The Lord is my strength and my song;  
he has given me victory.*

*This is my God, and I will praise him—  
my father's God, and I will exalt him!*

*-Exodus 15:1-2*

~~~~~

There is a time and a place for everything. When you are escaping death, you don't have time to stop and look behind you. You just run.

But then there is a time when you understand that you have been rescued. This was that time. The Israelites experienced yet another miracle. They walked through the sea on dry ground. When they made it, they saw the waters return and crush that ensuing army.

So they stopped and sang in praise to God.

Above are the first few lines of the song found in Exodus 15. They sing to celebrate the victory that God brought to them. They cheer about the relief they felt now that they were safely on the other side of the Red Sea.

It was a celebration!

God answered the prayers of His people. Through the faithfulness of Moses and all of the Israelites, they were able to escape slavery through God's mighty hand.

Do you ever celebrate God's faithfulness in your life? Or do you forget? Or do you take credit for what God did?

Take a moment to write God a thank you note for the many blessings He has given to you. Do this every day. You will be surprised at how this changes your perspective on everything that happens in your life.



Day 29 Monday, March 18

A year after Israel's departure from Egypt, the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai. In the first month of that year he said, "Tell the Israelites to celebrate the Passover at the prescribed time, at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. Be sure to follow all my decrees and regulations concerning this celebration." -Numbers 9:1-3

~~~~~

It begins. A new tradition that will continue for thousands of years. You can even find homes across the world celebrating it in this present day.

So let's take a look at this tradition. I believe that the more we know about this tradition, the more we understand what Jesus was trying to communicate to His disciples in the upper room. Not only was Jesus pointing out the ways in which the elements of the Passover point to the Messiah, I believe He was teaching them, and now us, the way to tell others about the Good News of God's redemption plan.

All four Gospels mention the Last Supper. However, it takes some cultural understanding for us to recognize what is happening if this is our annual tradition.

Traditions connect us to the past. They help us to remember what happened so that we learn from it.

As we think about this tradition, picture what it would have been like for the Israelites to celebrate the one year anniversary of the Passover. They would be out in the Wilderness. Their memories would still have been fresh. The joy would still be resonating in their souls.

Take a moment to write down two or three of your favorite traditions. Who do they connect you with? Write down the feelings that you associate with each of these traditions.



## Day 30 Tuesday, March 19

*So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him. -John 13:4-5*

~~~~~

Some of the scenes from the Gospels bring us right into the Passover Meal. In John 13, Jesus takes the role of the leader and puts his own little spin on the tradition. In a seder, there is an opening prayer while washing hands. Jesus, instead of washing His own hands, takes the water basin and He washes His disciples' feet.

This is Jesus' last chance to teach His disciples, and He uses this part of the meal to emphasize His role as a servant. This is so powerful! The disciples are arguing over who is going to be the best and sit closest to Jesus, and Jesus calmly and patiently leads by example.

Not only does He take the role of a servant, He serves His disciples. This must have made their heads spin. Peter calls out his rabbi. (which is hilarious!) He knows more than the Son of God?

Jesus continues to be a loving and kind teacher. He shares with them the significance of this meal and why He needs them to understand His humility. Jesus hopes they will follow His lead after He is gone.

Picture what it would be like to be in that upper room with Jesus. Would you understand what was going on? How would you feel having your feet washed by Jesus? Write some words about how this changes your perspective about Jesus.



Day 31 Wednesday, March 20

In the evening Jesus arrived with the Twelve. As they were at the table eating, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, one of you eating with me here will betray me."

Greatly distressed, each one asked in turn, "Am I the one?"

He replied, "It is one of you twelve who is eating from this bowl with me. For the Son of Man must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for the one who betrays him. It would be far better for that man if he had never been born!" -Mark 14:17-21

~~~~~

In the Gospel of Mark, we only have a few things mentioned about the Passover. The preparation, Jesus calling out a betrayer, the bread and the cup, and a final hymn.

With some understanding of the Seder meal, we know that this was no short meal. The Gospel of John spends much more time remembering the conversations and teachings while enjoying the Passover meal.

But not Mark. He gets to the point.

Mark points the significance of Jesus pointing out the betrayer.

During the Seder meal, the host leads the people to dip the matzah into the bowl of horseradish. It is meant to bring tears. (Horseradish when it is raw is definitely strong enough to make you cry!) When Jesus says He will be betrayed by one of the disciples, they all look at themselves. Judas proceeds to dip into the same bowl as Jesus during that time of the meal. He then leaves and the other disciples just assume Judas is paying for something like he was known to do as their treasurer.

There were many things that Jesus suffered, but let's not forget about being betrayed. Jesus invested into Judas. Jesus loved him. But given the chance, he handed over Jesus to be killed.

Ouch.

In the story of the Exodus, we remember the tears and pain of slavery by eating the horseradish and remember that it was the cries of the Israelites that called out to God to be rescued.

Judas had his own agenda. And it cost him his life.

Have you ever been betrayed before? How did it make you feel? God wants you to know that He understands and still asks you to trust. Take a moment to give your past pain to God to be healed. Pray over that list.



## Day 32 Thursday, March 21

*As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take this and eat it, for this is my body." -Matthew 26:26*

~~~~~

When we read this part of the Passover meal, we often put our own cultural spin on it. But it takes on a new life when we place it in the heart of the Seder meal.

During the order of the meal, the host takes one of the three pieces of matzah and holds it up. Then the host breaks the matzah into two pieces. He places one of them into a white linen pouch. This piece of bread is called the afikomen. It is wrapped in the pouch and then hidden until after the meal. When it is time, the kids go searching for the afikomen and whoever finds it gets a toy, candy, or some money.

The bread is then shared as a dessert.

Jesus says that this bread is His body. The matzah is stripped from the baking process. Just like Jesus was whipped. The matzah is also pierced so it doesn't bubble while baking. Just like Jesus was pierced on the cross. And the matzah is wrapped in white linen and hidden until it is brought back. Just like Jesus was buried and wrapped in white linen and placed in a tomb.

When Jesus says, "this is my body," Jesus was predicting what would happen to His body. But as we see, the Passover meal predicted what would happen as well.

The significance is obvious.

Jesus was telling His disciples to remember His sacrifice for them every year for the rest of eternity that the messiah laid down His life for them by giving His body to be crucified.

While the disciples may have missed the point that night in the upper room, something tells me that they knew exactly what Jesus was saying that next year when they enjoyed the Passover and ate the matzah.

Did you know that communion comes from the Passover meal? How does that change your perspective on communion? Write down some things that you love about communion.



Day 33 Friday, March 22

Then he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. For I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come." -Luke 22:17-18

~~~~~

Because the Passover meal was a celebration, it spread out over a long night. To mark the night, the host would lead the guests through four cups of wine. Each of them are significant to the Exodus story.

The first cup is the cup of sanctification. The second cup is the cup of deliverance. The third cup is the cup of redemption. And the last cup is the cup of praise.

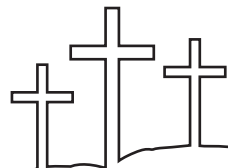
Jesus takes the third cup, which guests enjoy after the meal, and He holds it up and says, "this is my blood."

Jesus compares this wine to His blood. He is once again predicting His death by showing that His blood will be poured out. This points also to the life saving blood of the lamb that was placed on the door for the Passover.

He is using the third cup. This is the cup of redemption. This refers to the third promise in Exodus 6, where God declares that He will redeem His people with an outstretched arm. Redemption means to be bought with a price. Jesus was declaring that He was going to pay the price for our lives to be rescued from death.

So the disciples drink the third cup. They continue to enjoy themselves while their host, Jesus, continues to describe to them the torture that He will endure the next day.

Write down the word redemption. What is your definition? Take a moment to think about the bravery that Jesus had while in that Upper Room.



## Day 34 Saturday, March 23

*As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take this and eat it, for this is my body."*

*And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them and said, "Each of you drink from it, for this is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many. Mark my words—I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom."*

*Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.*

*-Matthew 26:26-30*

~~~~~

Jesus doesn't drink the last cup. Instead, He promises to His disciples that He won't drink the cup of praise until He is with His Father in Heaven.

But not the disciples. They finished the meal. They drank the fourth cup. (no wonder they fell asleep that night) As the night ended, they would sing some traditional songs and everyone would have a fun time celebrating into the night.

But not Jesus. He was about to be betrayed.

Sometimes I get so critical about the response of the disciples. They were with THE MESSIAH! He taught them so much! He performed so many miracles that they had lost count. Yet, here they were, clueless.

When we look back at this night, it is easy to see what was going on. But at the time, it was easy to miss it.

These disciples were in their comfort zone. They knew the traditions, they had a delicious meal with lamb, wine and matzah. They knew that they were with their friend, who just washed their feet!

Yet, they missed it.

I know that I would have missed it as well. I would have been focused on myself or caught up in the festivities.

But then, I am reminded about what happened to these disciples. They turn from clueless into the leaders of the church. After the resurrection,

they take the message of Jesus Christ and create a revolution!



The next Passover would have been different. Peter, presumably (but I'm guessing), leads the next Seder meal, and with tears and with joy, he recounts the story of the Exodus. He takes the bread and the cups and mimics exactly what Jesus did for them.

And then they get it.

Time and time again they would say, "ahaaaaaa!"

Commit yourself to taking a moment in everything you do to look for God in the moment. How can Jesus make a difference in every part of your life? Write down some tangible things you can do to remind yourself to include God in everything.



Day 35 Monday, March 24

When all the people heard of Jesus' arrival, they flocked to see him, and also to see Lazarus, the man Jesus had raised from the dead. Then the leading priests decided to kill Lazarus, too, for it was because of him that many of the people had deserted them and believed in Jesus. -John 12:9-11

~~~~~

As we begin Holy Week, it is helpful for us to remember the unique position that Jesus has put Himself in, because He raised Lazarus from the dead. The skeptical religious leaders now find Jesus as the number one threat. They don't believe that Jesus really raised someone from the dead, because that is "impossible," but they know that everyone is talking about it.

With all of the nation coming to Jerusalem for the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the leaders decide to wait to get rid of Him so that they can do it secretly. They take every effort to plot and wait, and make sure it doesn't get out of hand.

But Jesus had other plans.

He was, after all, the Passover lamb.

As the week unfolds, we see all the factors happen which allows for Jesus to be tried, convicted, and killed.

This is the whole point. God sent His Son to be our sacrificial lamb to take away the sins of the world. It was a plan from the start. It was mapped out through the Exodus and predicted through the prophets. There would be a Messiah that would be anointed to be the bridge between God and humans. That through this sacrifice, humans would be made holy. Because of the blood of the Lamb, death would "pass over" us.

This event changed the course of history.

Take a moment and reflect on the first moment you believed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Write down in a few words what life was like before, and how you came to know Jesus, and how life was changed once you believed. Be ready to share this story!



## Day 36 Tuesday, March 25

*Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.*

*Before you Gentiles knew God, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist. So now that you know God (or should I say, now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world? -Galatians 4:7-9*

~~~~~

I met a guy once that said that he was not capable of getting off drugs unless he was in jail or prison. This was true until God rescued him. He gave his life to Christ, and now has been clean for many years. Freedom.

When Jesus takes His disciples into the upper room, He leads them through the memory of the Exodus. The bitter conditions of slavery are important to remember. When the Israelites were slaves, they were beaten, worked brutally, and given no freedom. Sometimes we get blind to freedom.

It becomes your identity.

The reality of sin is that it leads to death. We become enslaved to the world. That is the core difference between sin and obedience. Sin leads to death. Obedience leads to life.

The Apostle Paul takes time to remind people that there are two types of people that are enslaved. People who are gentiles, who are not Jewish. And the people who are Jewish but are slaves to the law.

Both of these lead to death. The law's job is to point out that we are sinners. Sin leads to death. Therefore, you need a Savior.

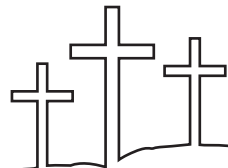
I find it interesting that we can easily see how sin and bad decisions lead to death in other people's lives, yet we struggle to see it in our own lives.

When we encounter people who don't know Jesus, I don't think we need to point out sin. That is the job of the Holy Spirit. But I wonder if our job is to follow the example that Jesus gave to us when He took His disciples through the Passover meal.

Slavery might be the better way to talk about sin in our culture. Not only that, in an effort to bring the Gospel to the world, maybe we should look for people who find themselves trapped in the slavery to sin.

The Apostle Paul did. Then we describe to people the difference between slavery and freedom.

Take a moment to write down some characteristics of slavery and some characteristics of freedom.



Day 37 Wednesday, March 26

God paid a high price for you, so don't be enslaved by the world. Each of you, dear brothers and sisters, should remain as you were when God first called you. -1 Corinthians 7:23-24

~~~~~

The next step to following the example of Jesus in telling the story of the Passover as it relates to the messiah is to tell people about redemption.

Jesus held up the third cup after dinner and tells His disciples that this is His blood, poured out for the redemption of sin. We should remember that!

I wonder if I was kidnapped and brought into a cage in the jungles of South America, would anyone come after me. I know that sounds funny. But the reality is that this rescue effort would not be safe, it would not be cheap, and there would be no guarantees that I was still alive or that it would work.

It's humbling.

But Jesus holds up the third cup and says that your life is bought with a price. That God sent His Son into the world to pay the price. He became the Passover Lamb to be the sacrifice for our sins.

One interesting part of the Seder meal is that they place a lamb bone on the plate. Each year, families were commanded to eat a lamb completely that night. This happened for centuries. But right after the death of Jesus, when the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, they stopped. No more lamb.

Instead, they would put a bone on the plate to be reminded of that tradition. The name of the bone is zeroa. That word for bone in Hebrew is the word that it used in Exodus 6, which says "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm (zeroa) and great acts of judgment."

Isn't that amazing! Even though the Jewish people didn't realize that Jesus was the Messiah, their tradition changed so that they remember the outstretched arm of Jesus buying us for a price.

If I was rescued from that cage in the jungle of South America, I would never forget those that rescued me. I would owe my life to them.

Take a moment to give thanks to God that He loves you so much that He was willing to buy you with the price of His blood. Write a prayer that reflects this.





## Day 38 Thursday, March 27

*For the Lord your God has blessed you in everything you have done. He has watched your every step through this great wilderness. During these forty years, the Lord your God has been with you, and you have lacked nothing.”*  
-Deuteronomy 2:7

~~~~~

About two thousand years ago, Jesus took His disciples into the upper room and laid out God's plan to give His Son for us, as a ransom. The story of the Exodus was a central layout for what Jesus was doing.

There really are four parts of this story, just like there are four cups. Slavery. Redemption. Then the wilderness.

This is the time after being rescued from slavery, but the time before the fourth part, the promised land.

The wilderness is an interesting part of the story. The Israelites could have walked right into the promised land in a few weeks. But God needed more time. He needed to take them out of the land of Egypt and not right into the promised land, because they needed to learn their new identity. They were no longer slaves, they were children of God.

This is a land where there was nothing, and yet God provided everything they needed. Manna was a strange wafer that would arrive every day. God would provide quail and water when they were grumpy. And yet, they continued to flourish.

Once you put your faith in Christ, the rest of your life becomes a wilderness. Jesus went into the wilderness for forty days. That was when He was extremely tempted by the devil. The Israelites took forty years to get to a place that should have taken them three weeks.

That is God's plan. The Apostle says in Philippians 2:12b, Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.

The Wilderness gives us a chance to figure out what it means to be rescued. We shed the old identity of being a slave to this world and we become new creations that now are learning more about ourselves and about our savior. God promises to provide for us as we learn to be more and more dependent on Him.

Take a moment to define the word wilderness. How does that resonate with you and your faith journey?



Day 39 Good Friday, March 27

But the other criminal protested, "Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."
-Luke 23:40-43

~~~~~

The fourth step in salvation is the Promised Land. The Israelites finally arrive and take over the land, promised to them. Jesus describes it to the criminal who was dying next to Him as "paradise."

This is our hope.

Jesus died for us so that we may live forever in Heaven. It is a picture described to us as the original Garden of Eden.

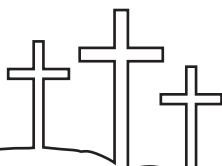
Jesus didn't die for nothing. He died so that we may live with Him forever. This is the life that He promised. To walk on streets of gold. He promises to prepare a room for us.

This is the invitation that Jesus is offering to us. Eternity.

When Jesus says He is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, He means it. He promises to come back for us and to bring us to our new eternal home.

The criminal on the cross didn't earn it. Jesus paid the price for him. You can't earn it. You just need to believe in the Passover Lamb.

Take a moment to remember the pain and the suffering that Jesus went through to pay the price for our sins.



## Day 40 Saturday, March 28

*Then he took the body down from the cross and wrapped it in a long sheet of linen cloth and laid it in a new tomb that had been carved out of rock.*

*-Luke 23:53*

~~~~~

Between Friday and Sunday is Saturday. (obviously) But what do we do here? We have grieved the night before. We have prepared our hearts for forty days (and some Sundays) and now we are caught between the cross and the resurrection. The women prepared the grieving resources. The disciples mourned not only the loss of their friend, but also mourned how they abandoned Him even though they promised Him that they would never do that!

Saturday is a time for us to make sure that we are ready. The resurrection changed the course of history. But it doesn't mean anything if we don't understand the plan of God. We, like many, will miss the power of the Resurrection if we get caught up in the ways of the world. We take our focus off the plan that God had since the beginning of time.

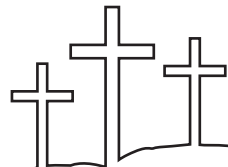
Saturday puts us in a place of humility. We mourn our lives that have been covered in sin, which leads to death, and we hope that the resurrection comes to us because of our belief in Jesus Christ.

So grieve.

Remember that Jesus went through torture that was almost death even before being crucified on the cross. Remember how His friends betrayed him, denied him, and abandoned Him in His greatest time of need.

Remember how Jesus died. He was prayerful. He forgave those who were killing Him. He was leading people to eternity, even on the cross.

Then you will be ready for tomorrow morning...



HAPPY EASTER!



HE HAS RISEN, HE HAS RISEN INDEED!



La Jolla
Presbyterian Church

7715 Draper Ave., La Jolla, CA 92037
858-454-0713 ljpres.org