



Ed Drew

The Wonder of Easter

An Easter journey
for the whole family



The Wonder of Easter

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Before you begin

Easter can be the highlight of the year.

Better than Christmas.

Bigger than a birthday.

And about so much more than just chocolate.

We are going to walk through Luke's Gospel and parts of the Old Testament to discover why the story of Jesus' death and resurrection is the most amazing story ever told.

Discover a new story every day as you follow in Jesus' footsteps:

- *Shout* as Jesus rides on a donkey into Jerusalem as the returning King.
- *Listen* as an innocent man is sentenced to the ultimate punishment.
- *Mourn* as the King of the universe dies.
- *Share* the relief of knowing that Christ's pain brings us into his kingdom.
- *Watch* as the King rises again.
- *Imagine* the hill outside Jerusalem as the disciples watch their best friend rise to rule in heaven.
- *Discover* the greatest story of human history.

This is the wonder of Easter.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Take ten minutes with your family each day to prepare for Easter.

Whether your youngest is three years old or your oldest is eighteen, this flexible, easy-to-use resource will allow the whole family to celebrate the limitless wonder of Easter.

The devotions we've created are an achievable joy, not an unrealistic burden. No more than ten minutes are needed to complete a daily section. If you want to take longer, that's great!

There are five for each week. If you can't get to do this every day, that's alright. Stuff happens. We hope that if you miss one, you can pick it up again easily. You might discover that five a week is an unrealistic target. So to help you, some have been marked with "Key Story" to help you choose which ones to pick. You can also see the key stories on the chart opposite.

If you'd like a bit more help...

- there are some top tips on page 119 at the back of the book.
- there's also a Bible timeline on page 117 to help your family see how each Bible story fits into the big picture of Bible history.
- and if you would find it helpful, you can download an answer sheet to all of the questions from www.thegoodbook.com/wonder-answers.pdf



DAY 1

The return of the King

Where are we going today?

Jesus arrived in Jerusalem as God's King coming home, but some people were angry because they thought Jesus was just an ordinary man.

READY?

- **Optional.** If you are going to act out today's story, grab a bunch of coats.
- Open your Bible to **Luke 19 v 30 and 35-40** (or read the passage from page 12).

LET'S GO!

Pray: Dear Father, please help us to understand better who Jesus is so that we are most excited about him. Amen.

Passage

- *Where are we in the Bible?* Jesus is arriving in Jerusalem as the King. Since he was last here, things have changed: everyone now knows about him. It's as if Jesus has returned to Jerusalem, the capital city, to be crowned as King.
- *Look out* for how people are feeling in this true story. Watch out—there's more than one answer!
- *Read* the passage.

Luke 19 v 30 and 35-40

³⁰ He said, "Go into the town you can see there. When you enter it, you will find a colt tied there. No one has ever ridden this colt. Untie it, and bring it here to me.

³⁵ So they brought it to Jesus. They threw their coats on the colt's back and put Jesus on it. ³⁶ As Jesus rode toward Jerusalem, the followers spread their coats on the road before him.

³⁷ Jesus was coming close to Jerusalem. He was already near the bottom of the Mount of Olives. The whole crowd of followers was very happy. They began shouting praise to God for all the powerful works they had seen. They said,

³⁸ "God bless the king who comes in the name of the Lord!
There is peace in heaven and glory to God!"

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell your followers not to say these things!"

⁴⁰ But Jesus answered, "I tell you, if my followers don't say these things, then the stones will cry out."

Perhaps try...

- Act out the scene. (For under-5s, open up a pre-school Bible such as *The Beginner's Bible* for this story instead.)
- Can one of you be Jesus? Throw a coat over a chair, a buggy, a scooter or anything that can be sat on. One of you can be Jesus, sitting, as he arrives in Jerusalem—or just leave the chair empty, imagining that Jesus is there.

The rest of you can throw your coats on the floor in front of Jesus. Praise God with the words from verse 38. Can you put these shouts into your own words? There is real joy here. God's King has finally arrived—home with his people! What would you have shouted if you were this excited?

Questions for us all

1. How did the crowd feel as Jesus arrived? Why did they feel like that? (See verses 37-38.)
2. How did the Pharisees feel? (See verse 39.) Why was that, do you think?

Know the word?

A **Pharisee** was a religious leader. They were very well-known, and respected for their knowledge and love of God. But perhaps they didn't love God as much as they thought...

Question for 3s and 4s

Did you spot what Jesus was riding on?

Question for 5-7s

Imagine being so excited about a man that you shout, sing and dance in the street as he rides past! Is there anything you know about Jesus that would make you shout and sing and dance?

Question for over-7s

In verse 40, Jesus says that if the Pharisees silence the crowds, "then the stones will cry out". Was he serious? Could anything make stones cry out?

Question for teens

What were the Pharisees feeling? (It's quite complex.) Can you suggest two or three different things that are going on in their heads? Why might people today want to shut down those who are talking about how great Jesus is?

Prayer suggestion

If you were in the crowd shouting praises to God with total joy for Jesus, what would you love to shout? If shouting out a prayer is too strange, then just say it as a quiet prayer.

Got time to chat?

Do you ever see others wanting to silence talk of Jesus—refusing to let him be mentioned in a conversation? Talking as if he's really awkward or different? Even if no one in the world was talking about Jesus, the stones could cry out in praise! Knowing this, when people don't want you to talk about Jesus, how does that change how you feel about him?

Something more for the adults?

Read Luke 19 v 41-44. How was Jesus feeling? What caused that? But the crowd had just been praising God for his arrival... so what did Jesus want for Jerusalem? And us?

DAY 10

Taken away by guards

Where are we going today?

Judas, who had pretended to be Jesus' friend, came with soldiers to arrest him. Jesus was still kind and gentle, and in control.

READY?

- **Optional!** Can you find an object to use as a sword that wouldn't hurt if someone got hit with it, such as a drinking straw or a card sword.
- Open your Bible to **Luke 22 v 47-54** (or read the passage from page 40).

LET'S GO!

Pray: Dear Father, hearing you talk to us in the Bible is more exciting than a king or queen chatting to us in person. Thank you! Amen.

Perhaps try...

- This is a very physical passage. One of you can read the passage and give instructions to anyone else available, so that they can act it out.
- Make sure you have the following in the drama: a kiss, a sword swipe, a cut-off ear, a healed ear and an arrest.

Passage

- *Where are we in the Bible?* Judas has already told the religious leaders that he will hand Jesus over to them, to have him killed. Jesus is on the Mount of Olives with his friends, where he's gone to pray.

- Look out for the fight. What does Jesus do?
- Read the passage.

Luke 22 v 47-54

⁴⁷ While Jesus was speaking, a crowd came up. One of the 12 apostles was leading them. He was Judas. He came close to Jesus so that he could kiss him.

⁴⁸ But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you using the kiss to give the Son of Man to his enemies?"

⁴⁹ The followers of Jesus were standing there too. They saw what was happening. They said to Jesus, "Lord, should we use our swords?" ⁵⁰ And one of them did use his sword. He cut off the right ear of the servant of the high priest.

⁵¹ Jesus said, "Stop!" Then he touched the servant's ear and healed him.

⁵² Those who came to arrest Jesus were the leading priests, the soldiers who guarded the Temple, and the Jewish elders. Jesus said to them, "Why did you come out here with swords and sticks? Do you think I am a criminal? ⁵³ I was with you every day in the Temple. Why didn't you try to arrest me there? But this is your time—the time when darkness rules."

⁵⁴ They arrested Jesus and took him away. They brought him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed them, but he did not go near Jesus.

Questions for us all

1. What happened during the fight?
2. Jesus told them that they could have arrested him on any day. Why do you think they came with soldiers and swords at night time?

Question for 3s and 4s

Did you hear who the soldiers came to get?

Question for 5-7s

Jesus is so powerful that he could have flicked the soldiers down the hill with just his little finger. He could have uprooted a tree, swung it like a club and whacked the whole crowd who came to get him. Why didn't he?

Question for over-7s

Judas chose to hand Jesus over to the soldiers with a kiss. Why do you think Jesus was sad about that?

Question for teens

Jesus knew exactly why his enemies hadn't arrested him during the day, while he taught in the temple. He told them, "But this is your time—the time when darkness rules." What do you think Jesus meant by that?

Prayer suggestion

What surprises you about Jesus in this story? How does that make you think about him? Thank Jesus that this is what he is like.

Got time to chat?

On the news, in our country and even in the place where we live, we see evil. Just like in this story, Jesus is allowing evil to rule in some places for some time. Can you see that Jesus is still in charge even though the soldiers arrest him and take him away? When we see evil ruling, what should we remember? What can we pray?

Something more for the adults?

When we see evil, when we see intimidating strength, but when we struggle to see it clearly because it's hidden in the shadows of the darkness—how do we respond? How do we feel? We are not Jesus. We do not have his courage, his strength or his control. So what is the right response for someone who is trusting in Christ, in those moments.

DAY 16

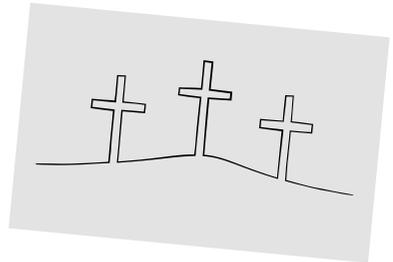
Nailed to a cross

Where are we going today?

Jesus wanted his Father to forgive those who were nailing him to a cross.

READY?

- **Optional!** Get a piece of paper and some felt-tip pens. Draw the three crosses, ready for adding Jesus and the two criminals. Or create the scene using some play dough, some Lego people and ice-lolly sticks.
- Open your Bible to **Luke 23 v 32-34** (or read the passage from page 58).



LET'S GO!

Pray: Dear Father, help us to see how surprising Jesus' actions and words were, as he was nailed to a cross. Amen.

Perhaps try...

- Go through the steps of this story with drawings or toy people, as you read it.
 1. Jesus and two criminals were taken outside of Jerusalem, outside the city walls.
 2. At the place of execution, all three men were fixed to the crosses, and left to die.

3. Jesus prayed for those who were doing this to him, asking that God would forgive them. They didn't understand that they were killing the Son of God.
4. The soldiers rolled dice to see who would keep Jesus' clothes. He was so unimportant to them.

Passage

- *Where are we in the Bible?* The religious leaders had decided that Jesus should be punished with death for saying he was the Son of God. Pilate knew Jesus had done nothing to deserve death, but he gave in to the crowds and sent Jesus to his death.
- *Look out* for what happened to Jesus and what he did.
- *Read* the passage.

Luke 23 v 32-34

³² *There were also two criminals led out with Jesus to be killed.* ³³ *Jesus and the two criminals were taken to a place called the Skull. There the soldiers nailed Jesus to his cross. They also nailed the criminals to their crosses, one beside Jesus on the right and the other beside Jesus on the left.* ³⁴ *Jesus said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing." The soldiers threw lots to decide who would get his clothes.*

Questions for us all

1. What are the different things that happened to Jesus in this passage?
2. How did Jesus behave during these terrible moments?

Question for 3s and 4s

The soldiers really hurt Jesus. Did you hear where they put him to die?

Question for 5-7s

The soldiers thought Jesus was just another bad man who was being punished. What did they do with his clothes?

Question for over-7s

Do you remember what Jesus prayed as he was being put on the cross? Why is this prayer surprising?

Question for teens

If you stop for a moment and consider who Jesus is, what is the most surprising part of this passage?

Prayer suggestion

Jesus never stopped being loving and kind to those he met, even those who were in charge of his death. Thank God for that incredible love and care that Jesus still shows.

Got time to chat?

Jesus prays for people who hate him. What an amazing thought! He longed for those who killed him to be forgiven and to become his brothers and sisters. Wow! Imagine how much more Jesus prays for you, who are holding tight to him. When you make a huge mistake, and you feel as if you've let down Jesus (and others), what do you want to say to yourself and to Jesus? What do you think Jesus is praying to his Father for you?

Something more for the adults?

Jesus' prayer for those who were crucifying him is breathtaking. How could anyone do that? How can anyone long for people such as these to join him in heaven, as his brothers and sisters? It is a mind-and-heart-expanding moment. What love! What compassion and mercy! But the moment and the prayers continue—even today. Read Romans 8 v 31-35. Don't ever doubt that you are in Christ's thoughts. He is praying for you. Don't be downcast by your sin. Don't think you should throw yourself out of the kingdom—because Christ will do everything needed to hold you tight in his kingdom. The Lord himself is praying for you. Nothing can separate you from his eternal love.

DAY 30

Seen, touched and fed

Where are we going today?

Jesus showed his friends his scars and he ate food to prove that it was really him. In heaven, we will have bodies just like Jesus' body.

READY?

- **Optional!** Gather a few items from your kitchen and home that can be seen, tasted, smelt, touched and heard. Put them on a tray under a cover. Ideas:
 - *Touch:* Practically any object, as long as it is not sharp. For example, a coin, a spoon or a toy.
 - *Sight:* Can you find one obscure small part of an object so the children can guess what it belongs to? Use a lid, a tool or a kitchen utensil wrapped almost entirely in a kitchen towel.
 - *Taste:* With eyes shut, can you taste a few different fruits, crisps or drinks.
 - *Smell:* Find any distinctive-smelling foods—coffee, fruit, spices—or cleaning products.
 - *Hear:* Choose something that you can shake, such as a box of cereal or a packet of potato crisps.
- Open your Bible to **Luke 24 v 36-43** (or read the passage from page 101).

LET'S GO!

Pray: Dear Father, please help us to understand what we and Jesus will be like in heaven. Amen.

Perhaps try...

- To introduce today's key idea, use your five senses to identify various items.
- In today's story, we are going to see that Jesus told his friends to use their senses to be sure it really was him.

Passage

- *Where are we in the Bible?* The women found Jesus' tomb empty. The angels explained that Jesus was alive. Two friends met a mystery man on their way to Emmaus, but as soon as they realised it was Jesus, he disappeared. Those two ran back to Jesus' other friends to tell them everything. Will anyone get to just see Jesus and talk to him... normally?
- *Look out* for how many different senses Jesus tells his friends to use to check that it really was him.
- *Read* the passage.

Luke 24 v 36-43

³⁶ *While the two followers were telling this, Jesus himself stood among those gathered. He said to them, "Peace be with you."*

³⁷ *They were fearful and terrified. They thought they were seeing a ghost.*

³⁸ *But Jesus said, "Why are you troubled? Why do you doubt what you see?" ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me. You can see that I have a living body; a ghost does not have a body like this."*

⁴⁰ *After Jesus said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹The followers were amazed and very happy. They still could not believe it. Jesus said to them, "Do you have any food here?" ⁴²They gave him a piece of cooked fish. ⁴³While the followers watched, Jesus took the fish and ate it.*

Questions for us all

1. How did the disciples feel when Jesus was suddenly standing among them? Why do you think that was?
2. Jesus knew that they were worried and confused. How did he help them?

Question for 3s and 4s

What did they give Jesus to eat? (Read verses 41-43.)

Question for 5-7s

Which senses did Jesus use to show his friends that it really was him? (To make

this easier, go through each sense and ask if Jesus used that one to show that it was really him.)

Question for over-7s

What did Jesus want his friends to be absolutely certain of? Are you certain that it really was Jesus alive in the room? Or do you find it hard, as the disciples did?

Question for teens

When people think about heaven, they often seem to think about clouds and harps. Or people worry that their imperfect bodies will still be who they are. How does this story help us understand what our bodies will be like when we rise from the dead, in heaven? How do you feel about that?

Prayer suggestion

Thank Jesus for what you feel certain about. Tell Jesus what you find confusing or hard to understand.

Got time to chat?

Even after the disciples had seen, heard and touched Jesus, they were still finding it hard to believe it was Jesus because they were "amazed and very happy". What is there that still fills you with joy and amazement about Jesus being alive? We can get so used to the story of the first Easter that we forget the joy and amazement. It's worth taking a moment to find it again. When Easter has become dull and boring, we have stopped understanding it.

Something more for the adults?

Read 1 Corinthians 15 v 51-57. There will be a moment, for every Christian, when the trumpet will sound and we will be raised imperishable, indestructible, immortal. We will be different to how we are now. But we will be us. Wonderfully us. Perfectly us. Without sin. Without disability. Without frustration. Without death. Thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

A note about Jesus' resurrection body

After Jesus had risen from the dead, he seemed to be like any other person: he walked, talked and had the scars from his death. But he was also different. People couldn't tell it was him; he could just disappear and then appear somewhere else. In today's story we see more of how normal and how different Jesus now is.

DAY 32

*He's gone.
We're still happy.*

Where are we going today?

Jesus left his friends to join his Father in heaven. His friends were so joyful that they didn't stop singing songs to Jesus.

READY?

- **Optional!** Find something precious, something expensive or a treat that your family love.
- Open your Bible to **Luke 24 v 50-53** (or read the passage from page 108).

LET'S GO!

Pray: Dear Father, saying goodbye can be difficult. Please teach us why Jesus' disciples were delighted despite saying goodbye to him. Please would we be just as delighted even though we can't see Jesus! Amen.

Perhaps try...

- Play a quick-fire game of hide and seek with your precious item.
- When something matters to us, we need to know where it is. We don't need to have it with us, but we need to know exactly where it is. When we don't know where it is, we find that very worrying. It's lost.
- In today's Bible passage, Jesus' disciples knew that they would no longer be able to see Jesus—but they knew exactly where he would be, so they were happy.

Passage

- *Where are we in the Bible?* Jesus had finished what he needed to do on earth: he had been killed and raised to life. Now his friends are absolutely certain he is alive and they know what to do next: to tell others. They are ready for Jesus to leave them.
- *Look out for what the disciples did first after saying goodbye to Jesus.*
- *Read the passage.*

Luke 24 v 50-53

⁵⁰ Jesus led his followers out of Jerusalem almost to Bethany. He raised his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he was separated from them and carried into heaven. ⁵² They worshipped him and then went back to the city very happy. ⁵³ They stayed in the Temple all the time, praising God.

Questions for us all

1. What was the last thing Jesus did for his friends before he left them?
2. What did the disciples do first after seeing Jesus leave?

Have you got time to sing a praise song to Jesus; just as the disciples did after he left them?

Question for 3s and 4s

How did Jesus leave?

Question for 5-7s

What do you think the disciples saw as Jesus left them? When they got home to their families that night, what do you think they said?

Question for over-7s

It's strange that when Jesus died, his friends were all super-miserable and sad. This time, when they know they won't get to see him, they're super-happy and shouty. Why do they feel so different? What has changed?

Question for teens

It's amazing to think that Jesus was sent to be executed for saying that he would sit down on the throne at God's right-hand side (Luke 22 v 69-71), and now he is off to do exactly that! The disciples left very happy and went

to the temple, praising God all the time. Is there anything in this passage that makes you very happy, wanting to praise God all the time?

Prayer suggestion

There was huge joy for Jesus' friends in knowing that he left earth and went to rule, seated at the right-hand side of God on his glorious throne. Can you find one reason each to thank and praise God that Jesus is ruling with him?

Got time to chat?

Joy is what we all want, but we find it hard to be joyful for long. Joy is a deep sense that everything is just right. Deep in your guts, everything just feels that it's how God made it to be. Everything is alright. It is going to be alright. We don't need to be worried. The disciples managed to feel joyful for days, as they stayed at the temple, all day every day, hour after hour, praising God. Think for a moment about where that joy came from. They were convinced that Jesus was alive. He was real. He was never going to die again. He was on his throne. He was ruling. No one could ever stop him ruling. He was ruling over them. They were safe. They were his. He was there. Nothing else really mattered to them.

We too can feel that joy in our lowest moments. The lowest moments are still real. They still hurt. We still wish they weren't happening. But when we're in those moments, what will we say to ourselves, to remind ourselves of the deep, settled, unchanging joy that the disciples had, and that we can too?

Something more for the adults?

Luke didn't stop here. He pulled out a second parchment and started all over again. Read Acts 1 v 1-11 for Luke's second bite at the apple, where he retells these same events with a slightly different emphasis. Take a long look at verse 11. There are more reasons here for joy, expectation and hope. Imagine the day when some different people will look up and see Jesus Christ return. He will come down. His feet will come to gently rest on the earth once more and he will wrap all history up. You can feel joy as you look forward to that day. He's coming soon!

Top tips

- A hardback Bible sits open, flat on a table, so it is one less thing to go wrong or to distract children by flicking shut. For under-11s, the International Children's Bible is a good, simplified version. This is the version we have printed in this book. Otherwise the New International Version is great. For a large family, each person will need their own Bible, using the same translation, or their own copy of this book. Alternatively, in whatever translation you choose, you could print out copies of the passage from www.biblegateway.com
- Under-5s will struggle with many of the activities. They find it hard to understand that a drama is recreating an ancient story. They find metaphors, illustrations and visual aids hard to process. This age-group would be helped by having a children's picture Bible to see what is happening in the Bible stories. *The Beginners Bible* and the *Jesus Storybook Bible* are good for this. These devotions will need to be kept very simple for them.
- Try to read through the devotion once, before you sit down with your children. Often, it will help if you grab a suggested object as a prop before you start. Occasionally, there is the option to prepare a visual aid.
- If your family are new to devotions, or if you are re-starting them after a break, and you face some opposition to the idea, you could set a ten-minute timer (and hide it, so that the ticking seconds aren't watched!). Promise that when the alarm goes off, you will stop the conversation and all present will pray in response. Keep that promise—no matter how far you've got.
- If your children are currently more malleable, then don't set a timer, as it may set an expectation that the ten minutes will be a form of a torture.

- Do set an expectation that this time together will be the highlight of the day. Jesus talked about the Bible as “daily bread”—your family needs this ten minutes each day to survive.
- Remember that there is huge value in your children seeing their parents answering questions from the Bible, talking about their faith, showing that they don’t have all the answers and praying. It will have a lasting impact for children to see their parents engaging with the Bible, humbly accepting that they themselves are a work in progress and praying to their own Father in heaven.
- Many families are clinging on to sanity, joy, peace, hope or faith by their fingernails. Ask for your children to help make these happen.
 - What time do we want these devotions to happen?
 - Where do we want them to happen so that they will be a great opportunity to learn and concentrate?
 - What will need to be done before we can sit down together each day?
 - What role can each of us play to make them happen?
 - Don’t be disappointed if these devotions feel like ten minutes of slightly miserable chaos. If you can manage to do three or four so that there is a sense of an expectation and a routine, then things will usually improve. As always with children, there will be days that leave you in despair. Those days will show you your need of Jesus Christ in your parenting. No bad thing.
- Change the plan if the plan isn’t working.
- God bless you in this. Take a moment to pray for your efforts. If you don’t already feel dependent on Jesus Christ in your parenting, you are about to!

faith **in** kids

exists to support churches and parents in raising children to trust in Jesus Christ eternally.



Point your kids in the right direction—
when they're old they won't be lost.

Proverbs 22:6



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