

Devotional #1: “JESUS IN THE GARDEN”

Bible Readings: Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; & Luke 22:39-46*

(For Daily Readers, read one passage each day from the top of the lessons)

Digging Deeper: *The Garden of Gethsemane was a short hike east of Jerusalem just across the Kidron valley. With all of the stress Jesus was feeling, it is ironic that the name meant “oil press”.*

Family Activity...since this part of Jesus’ life takes place in a “garden” outdoors, grab some flashlights and go outside with the kids. Take a blanket for everyone to sit on and read the passages together sharing the questions. When you pray, remember to thank God for His sacrifice and courage of Christ to go to the cross!

Teen to Parents:

- (1) In times of crises how do you respond? (Cool-headed...Nervous....Panic...Dig-in)
- (2) Where do you like to go to just get away from all of your stress?
- (3) What kind of stress was Jesus facing here?...your greatest stress?
- (4) What strikes you most about Jesus prayer to the Father?

Child to Parents:

- (1) Jesus was afraid of the pain that he was about to face on the cross, what kind of things are scary to you? (Parents—share things you were scared of as a child)
- (2) What can we do when we are afraid?...What did Jesus do?
- (3) Why do you think he talked to God?
- (4) Parents, close by sharing how most of what you were afraid of was nothing to be alarmed about. Maybe even share how you overcame your fear.

Singles Study:

- (1) Jesus wanted to rely on his closest friends in this time of crises yet they failed him, do you have some close Christian friends that have helped you in times of crises?
- (2) Are you the type of friend on which others can rely on for prayer, support, and accountability?
- (3) Take time to send a note of thanks to friends who have made a difference for you.

Couples:

One of Jesus favorite retreat areas was the Garden of Gethsemane. Decide on your favorite place and make a “date” to meet there and pray together. Bring a picnic lunch.

Devotional #2: “Betrayed with a Kiss”

Bible Readings: Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; & John 18:1-11

Digging Deeper: Judas, in his betrayal identified Jesus with a “kiss”. In the Eastern world, the kiss is as common a greeting as the handshake is here in the West. Among Arabs even today women and children kiss the husbands/fathers upon the cheeks and it is returned upon the forehead.

Family Activity...(supplies needed: Glow-sticks from Walmart sporting goods)

Gather everyone in a dark room and light a candle or lantern in the middle. Have each person share a prayer concern as you pass the glow-in-the dark stick around the circle. Write each concern on a piece of paper. After you pray, talk about how Jesus asked God to help him with his struggles, but only if it matched God’s will.

Teen to Parents:

- (1) When you were younger, who was your favorite adventure hero?....how did they respond to danger?
- (2) What can we learn from Jesus in this passage regarding how he handles the soldiers (John 18:4, 8) and Peter (v. 11)?
- (3) Briefly describe each of the disciples reactions (Mark 14:47-51)?
- (4) Ask each other this question: Have I ever betrayed your trust?

Child to Parents:

- (1) What does it mean to be a good friend?
- (2) Are you a “good friend” to Jesus?
- (3) How can someone not be a “good friend” to Jesus?

Singles Study:

Being betrayed can really hurt. We can be sure that Jesus understands this. Some who have been hurt by those they loved and trusted the most are never able to fully recover and trust again. If you have been betrayed, where are you on the journey of forgiveness: *still furious....angry....better, but not there yet.....part of the way....forgiving & moved on* Have you ever betrayed someone? What have you done to make that right? Have you betrayed Christ—do you expect forgiveness from Him?

Couples:

(Each one complete) One time when I felt a little betrayed by you was _____.
Will you forgive me for my failure and betrayal? (end in prayer)

Devotional #3: “Peter’s Denials”

Bible Readings: Matthew 26:57-75; Mark 14:53-72; Luke 22:54-62; & John 18:12-27

Digging Deeper: What is this business about “cock crowing”? In the time of Christ the Romans divided the night into four watches: late, midnight, cock-crowing, and early. The sound of the “cock crowing” was the signal name for the third watch of the night. For more information on this, look up “cock-crowing” in a Bible Dictionary such as Vines Expository Dictionary.

Family Activity...(go to: <http://www.legendsandlore.com/sockpuppets.html> for details on how to make a sock puppet or two) These are low cost and fun for younger kids. Design one to look like a rooster and then have everyone practice making their “rooster” crow. After this, talk about how Jesus wants us to always stand up for Him and for what is right. Discuss how having a best friend deny you might have felt for Jesus.

Teen to Parents:

- (1) Describe a time when you really disappointed yourself....How did you feel?
- (2) What feelings do you think Peter had when he heard the cock crow (John 18:27)?
- (3) What “rooster” helps remind you when you have failed? How do you handle guilt when you realize that you have blown it with others?....with God?
- (4) One passage says that Peter “followed at a distance”, have you ever done the same in your Christian life?

Child to Parents:

- (1) Does Jesus know when we are doing what He wants?
- (2) How does it feel to do good things?.....How do you feel when you do something wrong and hurt someone’s feelings?
- (3) What should we do when we hurt another person?....God?

Singles Study:

One of the most fundamental issues from Scripture is that God loves everyone unconditionally. He loves me when I succeed and He still loves me when I fail. Our value is not based on our performance with Him. Sometimes we let the world set the standard for our view of self instead of God. Do you have a healthy self esteem or is your self image too connected with secular things? What can break us out of this false image? (Note on the word, “self” in Matthew 22:39).

Couples:

Complete the following sentence: “Sometimes I feel like we are like Peter (following Jesus at a distance) when we _____”. Then, brainstorm ways you can walk with Jesus daily in greater commitment.

Devotional #4: “On Trial”

Bible Readings: Matthew 27:11-32; Mark 15:1-21; Luke 22:63-23:32; & John 18:28-19:16

Digging Deeper: (from Vines) Jesus was scourged before he was crucified. Under the Roman method of scourging, the person was stripped and tied in a bending posture to a pillar or stretched on a frame. The ‘scourge’ was made of leather thongs, weighted with sharp pieces of bone or lead, which tore the flesh of both the back and the breast. Eusibius records his having witnessed the suffering of martyrs who died under this treatment.

Family Activity... Hold a mock trial where one of the older children serves as the judge and the other family members divide into two teams (defense and prosecution). The family members decide what the charge will be (ie: eating too many cookies before dinner) and present their “case”. The judge has to make the final decision guilty or innocent. After this fun part, discuss how scary it must have been for Jesus to be put on trial and then sentenced to die.

Teen to Parents:

- (1) What makes a “courtroom” TV show so interesting?...What are your favorite parts?
- (2) What is so striking about Jesus’ defense?...How does he view these proceedings?
- (3) Why doesn’t Jesus use His wisdom to confound the prosecution?

Children to Parents:

- (1) When other kids are picking on someone, what should you do?
- (2) Why is it so important to tell all of the truth?...has anyone ever lied about you?
- (3) How can you stand up for Jesus this week at school?

Singles Study:

One of the things we hear these days is, “there is no justice!”...do you believe that is true or false? Why do you think there is so much corruption in the world today? Does the Bible offer any answers? (see also: 1 Peter 2:21-25, Romans 12:17-21).

Devotional #5: “Crucified”

Bible Readings: Matthew 27:33-56; Mark 15:22-41; Luke 23:33-49; & John 19:17-30

Digging Deeper: Jesus was offered a drink (wine mixed with myrrh) which was intended as an anesthetic, but this He refused. He was crucified at the third hour (9 a.m.) and died at the ninth hour.

Family Activity...Using a couple of small pieces of firewood or sticks from the yard help each of the children fashion a cross. Remind them that Jesus died on the cross for us not for anything He did wrong. Leave each of their crosses in a visible place in the house for the week.

Teen to Parents:

- (1) Have you ever got to spend time with someone who was near death or terminally ill?...What was it like?...What did they talk about?
- (2) What aspect of the crucifixion do you think was the worst for Jesus?
- (3) When did the meaning of the sacrificial death of Christ begin to make sense to you? ...How would you explain this to a non-Christian friend?

Children to Parents:

- (1) Read Luke 9:23-25, and ask them what they think it might mean to “carry our cross”?
- (2) Some people were ashamed to say that Jesus was their friend and teacher, how do you think this makes Jesus feel?

Singles Study:

In the passages today, Jesus experiences the depths of human suffering—even refusing to drink the wine to dull his pain. By His suffering, though we are healed (spiritually). Thinking of a time of great pain in your own life, how could God possibly use your pain to heal others that you encounter in life?

Couples: (for each to ask and answer)

Is there anything that I have said or done in the past that has caused you pain? ...how can I make things better now for you? (end with a prayer of forgiveness and renewal)

Devotional #6: “Buried”

Bible Readings: Matthew 27:57-66; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; & John 19:31-42

Digging Deeper: According to Josephus, the Jews are very careful about funeral rites even for those who were executed by crucifixion. They will make sure that they are taken down and buried before sunset. This practice is rooted in Deuteronomy 21:22-23.

Family Activity... This is a good time to plan a trip to visit the graves of those in your family nearby with the children. Talk about what they were like and how they blessed your lives. Also you might explain how graves today are somewhat different than in Jesus day (more like small caves). To prepare for the next lesson, help the children plant some seeds in an egg carton and place them in a sunny window.

Teen to Parents:

- (1) What kind of burial/funeral would you envision for yourself?...Large?..Small? ...Somber?...Celebrative?
- (2) Some unbelievers say that Jesus did not really die, but simply stopped breathing and then revived in the tomb. How would John 19:1, 18, 32-34, and 40 differ from this?
- (3) Jesus by human standards had “failed” at death, but some did not abandon Him. What do you learn from this for your life?...have you ever given up too soon?

Children to Parents:

- (1) Joseph of Arimathea, was a follower of Jesus who took care of the body of Jesus and then laid it in his own tomb. What could you give to Jesus?
- (2) Explain to them that today the way we give to Jesus is by the church and Christians giving to those in need (read: Matthew 25:34-40).

Singles Study:

In Matthew 27:51, it says that at the death of Jesus the “temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom”...what is the significance of this? What barriers did Jesus destroy? Are there any barriers in your life that need to be “torn” down? How can you begin?

Couples:

Since death is a reality, every couple needs to take time to talk about end of life issues such as: creating a will, guardianship, and living directives. Set a time to discuss these.

Devotional #7: “Resurrection!”

Bible Readings: Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-13; Luke 24:1-43; & John 20:1-21:14

Digging Deeper: Roman soldiers were posted to keep watch over the tomb of Jesus. Typically if a Roman fell asleep on duty and allowed a prisoner to escape, his punishment was to receive the sentence of the prisoner he failed to guard.

Family Activity...Return to the sprouting seeds in the egg carton (hopefully!). Use this as an example of how Jesus died and was buried, but the power of God brought Him back to life. Remind the children that God can do the same for us if we commit our lives to Him!

Teen to Parents:

- (1) Have you ever seen something “unbelievable”?
 - (2) When you tried to tell others about it, how did they react?
 - (3) Given what all these women have experienced in the last few days (Luke 9:37ff; 23:26-49, 55), how would they feel as they prepare to go to the tomb? ...when they arrive and find it empty?
 - (4) What difference does Christ’s resurrection make to you?
- JUST FOR FUN>>>If you could bring someone else back to life, who would it be?

Children to Parents:

This is a great time to talk gently about death—especially if your children have lost a loved one to death lately. Talk about how God cares for His people in life here and in the life to come.

Singles Study:

If you are a widow or widower take some time to jot down a list of thankfulness for what your departed spouse brought into your life. If you have issues with a departed loved one, spend some time in prayer asking God to help you forgive and move ahead in life.

Couples:

(Each ask the other) What are some things that we used to do together in our marriage that need to be “resurrected”? Make it a point to schedule this in for next week!

Devotional #8: “Jesus Gives a Mission”

Bible Readings: Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-16; Luke 24:44-45; & John 21:15-17

Family Activity... Get a globe and describe what the “world” in Jesus day consisted of. Then point out the different areas on the globe where our missionaries are serving. Then point out how many areas of the world today do not know about Jesus and need to be taught. Make and send one or more of our missionaries an encouraging card.

Teen to Parents:

- (1) Who does most of the chores around the house (cooking, cleaning, etc..) and who gets off the easiest?
- (2) How does this mission statement compare with the one in Matthew 10:5-7?
- (3) How does Jesus describe the process of becoming a disciple?...are you a Christian? ...if not, what is holding you back? ...if so, are you reaching out to others?

Children to Parents:

Neighborhoods are a great way to reach out to families who have no church home or are dissatisfied with the one they attend. Help your children make a list of friends nearby. Pray about the list of children and then call them up and invite them to Bible class with you. Provide transportation if needed.

Singles Study:

- (1) How did you become a Christian and learn about Christ?
- (2) Make a list of the names of those who most influenced you in your decision?
- (3) What did they do right? ...what did they do wrong? ...how can you reach out?
- (4) What role does prayer play in reaching out to others?

Couples:

Share with each other some things that they have done or said to bring you closer to God? How can you continue to grow spiritually in the future?

Devotional #9: “Jesus Ascension”

Bible Readings: Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:46-53; John 21:18-25; & Acts 1:1-11

Digging Deeper: Jesus ascended from the disciples (earth) to the “right hand of God” (see also: Psalm 110:1 & Mark 14:62).

Family Activity....(Outside-if the weather allows) Get a helium-filled balloon and attach a self-addressed stamped postcard. Write a note on it asking anyone who finds it to mail it back telling where it ended up. As you watch the balloon float away, share how Jesus ascended all the way back to heaven with the Father.

Teen to Parents:

- (1) Which is easiest to believe: a. what you hear; b. what you touch; c. what you see
- (2) How do the disciples react differently to Jesus being taken away now as compared to when He was taken away to be crucified?
- (3) How are you fulfilling the Great Commission? At school? At work?

Children to Parents:

Discuss with your children how that Jesus will come back one day to take us home to heaven. Describe some things we know about heaven (no more darkness, no more death, no more illness, no evil, etc..). Let each family member describe their favorite part of what they look forward to in heaven.

Singles Study:

In Luke 24:49, Jesus commanded his followers to go to Jerusalem and “stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” How good are you at patiently “waiting”? Have you ever gone through period of spiritual “waiting”?...what was it like?

Couples:

How is God preparing you now for greater spiritual growth in your marriage? What have you experienced that has brought you closer together in your marriage? Share these with each other and pray together.

***THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS DEVOTIONAL
JOURNEY! KEEP ON STUDYING AND GROWING!***