

The background is a textured, abstract composition of red and dark brown colors, resembling a rough, painted surface. A white cross is painted in the lower half of the image, with the word 'easter' written in white lowercase letters across its base.

Holy Week
**Devotional
Guide**

easter

monday

THE BEGINNING OF REDEMPTION

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace. Ephesians 1:7

What is redemption? What does it mean? The word “redemption” has been etched in stained glass. Its meaning has been lost, except for coupon clippers and those who want to collect the 5-cent deposit on soda cans. But the word “redemption” is a rich word which points to our forgiveness of sins. The Greek word for redemption found here in Ephesians 1:7 meant to go to the marketplace and buy a slave who is in trouble and then set the slave free.

That’s what Jesus did for us. He came to the marketplace where we have been slaves to sin. And He paid the price for all our sins, where He forgave us and set us free.

There is the story of the father and son who worked for months to build a toy sailboat. Every night when he came home from work, the man and his boy would disappear into the garage for hours. When the boat was finished, they stood back to admire the results. The wooden hull was painted bright red, and it was trimmed with gleaming white sails. When it was finished the boy went to a nearby river for the boat’s trial run. The father had tied a string to its stern to keep it from sailing too far. The boat performed beautifully, but the string broke and the sailboat drifted out of sight. Attempts to find it were fruitless.

A few weeks later, as the boy was walking home from school, he passed a store and was amazed to see his sailboat in the window. He ran inside to claim the boat, telling the owner he lost the boat. The store owner said, “You may have it back—for \$50.” The boy was stunned at how much it would cost him to regain his boat, but since it was so precious to him, he quickly set about earning the money to buy it back. Later he joyfully walked into the toy store and handed the owner \$50 in exchange for his sailboat. It was the happiest day of his life. As he left the store, he held the boat up to the sunlight. Its colors gleamed as though newly painted. “I made you, but I lost you,” he said. “Now I’ve bought you back.

Dear God, thank You for purchasing my pardon from sin through Your death on the cross. This week as I remember Easter, help me to be reminded each day that I have been bought at great price, and now I am free from the power of sin over Me thanks to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

tuesday

THE BEGINNING OF FORGIVENESS

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. Psalm 103:11-14

David tells us to bless the Lord and to not forget all of God's benefits. When we remember what God has done and is doing, our soul will automatically rejoice and bless His Name. Starting in verse 11, David names some of the benefits of God. How great is His steadfast love toward all who fear Him. It is as high as the heavens are above the earth. God's love is so great that we can in no way measure it. It is limitless. We can try to put words to it, but we soon realize our words are too small. God's love is immeasurably high. And this great love is steadfast—not changing, consistent, and dependable.

The next verse states, "as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us." This is great mercy—not getting what we deserve. How far is the east from the west? If you get in a jet with unlimited fuel and start heading east you can continue going east forever and never meet west. In other words the phrase "as far as the east is from the west" would mean our sin and God would be infinitely apart—never to come together again. There is no better analogy to describe the absolute act of mercy through forgiveness that God gives His people in Jesus Christ. When we are forgiven by God our shame is gone forever! Our guilt is pardoned forever! Our debt has been paid forever! We have been set free from our transgressions for all of eternity! Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Next we see the tender compassion of our Heavenly Father—a compassion that understands our weaknesses. He knows our frame and fully understands our shortcomings and of what we are made—dust. And knowing us this way He moves toward us knowing full well that we would not make the move toward Him. He shows us compassion we don't deserve and didn't do anything to earn. He moves toward us as a tender Father who is full of compassion for His little children.

Dear God, thank You for forgiving me and remembering my sins no more. Thank you for your great compassion. Help me in my own life to echo Your love for me in my compassion and forgiveness toward others. In Jesus' name, amen.

wednesday

THE BEGINNING OF REST

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

Weariness: We all experience it, though in different ways and for different reasons. Weariness results from the cumulative, multi-layered intersections of life’s complexities, bodily frailties, emotional heartbreaks, and the consequences of sin. Because our burdens are not simple, they are not relieved by simplistic platitudes (“Cheer up! Things are bound to turn around!”). But a simple promise can relieve a complex burden, provided we believe that the power behind the promise is complex and strong enough to relieve our heaviness.

And into our weariness steps the most complex power in existence speaking a promise as simple, hopeful, and refreshing as we could possibly want: Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. The simplicity of Jesus’s promise is both striking and refreshing. And his simple promise is audacious: “Come to me.” His simple promise implies a power behind it more than sufficient to lift what weighs us down.

Our souls find rest in hope. That’s what we’re frantically looking for whenever our souls are burdened and restless: hope. And that’s what most of the marketing of most of the products in the world tries to offer us: hope. But they are false hopes for soul-rest, providing only temporary distraction from or briefly masking the effects of our burdened souls. They don’t truly lighten our loads.

Jesus knows that he only is our salvation, our fortress, our mighty rock, our refuge. He is the one answer to every question, concern, fear, and need we will ever have. And so he simply and comprehensively offers us himself. For our hope is from him. Jesus’s great invitation for us to come to him, exchange yokes, and find rest is not intended for us to do in isolation. He intends for us to come to him in community, to come together. That’s one massive reason the church exists.

Dear God, life makes me so weary at times. Thank You for inviting me into your rest. Help me to remember that you don’t desire that I live under the constant stress and strain of life’s burdens. Help me to hand those over to you each day, and trust You to carry me through. In Jesus’ name, amen.

thursday

THE BEGINNING OF FAITH

**For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.
Ephesians 2:8-9**

The faith to begin a relationship with Jesus is not something that you come up with. God not only provides salvation, but the very faith necessary to have it. And He gives this faith as a gift.

A gift is something that becomes yours when you reach out and take it as your own when it is offered to you. A gift is something that is given because of the generosity and love of the giver. The value of a gift is based on the love of the giver, not any monetary value we may place upon it. A gift is given unconditionally and sacrificially. It always costs the giver something. A gift is given for the benefit of the receiver of the gift, to bring joy and happiness to him or her.

Salvation is a gift, not a reward for our labors. If we could earn it, it would be what is owed us and not a gift. We are saved by the grace of God. It is God's invitation for us to be embraced in His love. It is God reaching out to us inviting us to enjoy the blessings of living in fellowship with Him. He gave His very life so that we can have eternal life.

Consider the cost of God's gift of salvation. He sent Jesus to earth to die for our sins. On the cross, God had to turn His back on Jesus and not look at Him because He had our sins on His shoulders. Jesus suffered not only the horrific agony of dying on the Roman cross, He tasted the horrific guilt and shame of our sins, even though He himself had never sinned. Salvation is the most precious gift man could ever receive. He does not withhold His gift from anyone who wants it.

Dear God, thank You for your great gift of faith, so that I could come to salvation in You. Thank You for your gift of grace, your unmerited favor on me. This week I commit to remember your great gift of salvation. And I pledge to share this gift, Your gospel, with all that will hear. In Jesus' name, amen.

good friday

THE BEGINNING OF HOPE

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

It's the Hope Diamond of the Bible. A twenty-six-word parade of hope: beginning with God, ending with life, and urging us to do the same. Brief enough to write on a napkin or memorize in a moment, yet solid enough to weather two thousand years of storms and questions. If you know nothing of the Bible, start here. If you know everything about the Bible, return here. We all need the reminder.

The heart of the human problem is the heart of the human. And God's treatment is prescribed in John 3:16.

He loves.

He gave.

We believe.

We live.

Your doubts about a faith-based relationship might not be the same as those Nicodemus had. Maybe you wonder if God really cares for you as much as the Bible says He does. Maybe you question God's willingness and desire to intervene in the problems you are facing. For you, salvation might be nothing more than insurance against spending an eternity in hell; it has no present value.

Nicodemus tried religion and found it empty. He worked for a religious organization, spoke the religious language, and participated in religious activities. He might not have been the best person in the world, but he certainly wasn't the worst. He was in good standing with God... or was he? Jesus told Nicodemus that being good wasn't good enough. Even being religious wouldn't make it possible for Nicodemus to understand what Jesus was talking about. Even though Nicodemus thought he had the spiritual life under control, he was missing the main ingredient—he had never been born again.

Dear God, as I read John 3:16 today I am reminded of your plan of salvation—you love and gave, and I believe and live. Don't let me overlook the profound simplicity of it. Give me an opportunity today to share this verse with someone, and to share a last-minute invitation to our Easter worship. Help me to make today an opportunity to share life with someone I know. In Jesus' name, amen.

saturday

THE BEGINNING OF GRACE

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:16

Four words in this brief passage sum up all it has to say: "the throne of grace." A throne speaks of authority and power, while grace conveys the idea of sympathy and understanding. These two thoughts are combined in Jesus Christ. He is a man of infinite power, yet in complete and utter sympathy with us. He said himself, after his resurrection, "All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). His title here is, Jesus, the Son of God possessing the fullness of deity. But more than that, he is the one who has passed through the heavens. In this space age, this phrase should catch our eye. Jesus not only passed into the heavens but through the heavens.

The writer also makes clear that though the Lord Jesus has passed into the place of supreme power, and has absolutely no limits upon his ability to work, he also is tremendously concerned with our problems. He says, We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities. He has already gone the whole course before us. He has felt every pressure, He has known every pull, He has been drawn by every allurements we face, He has been frightened by every fear, beset by every anxiety, depressed by every worry. Yet He did it without failure, without sinning. Never once did He fall. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. That is, every help you need, every time you need it!

Dear God, help me to obey these simple words of admonition: To come with confidence, with boldness, to the throne of grace from which all help comes, all light, all hope. Remind me that because of the cross I can approach you every time I have a need, and You will be there to respond to one of Your children according to Your will. In Jesus' name, amen.

easter sunday

THE BEGINNING OF ETERNAL LIFE

**Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”
Luke 23:43**

The one and only Savior of the world hung on a wooden cross, with His arms of forgiveness wide open to all who would trust His name. The mocking hatred of the crowds, the spurious lies of the leaders, the twisted testimony of the false witnesses and the foul deeds of the Roman soldiers were amplified with the reviling sneers of the two criminals who were crucified alongside Jesus, until one was deeply convicted and recognized the King that was staked at his side. I wonder whether it was Christ’s gracious prayer of forgiveness that prompted his requests, when with a repentant heart he cried, this man has done nothing wrong, and then turning towards the Lord and pleaded: “Jesus, remember me when you come into Your kingdom.”

I doubt that thieving criminal expected to hear Christ’s merciful reply, “today you will be with Me in paradise”, nor would he have anticipated the wonderful joy into which he would shortly enter. But immediately his simple faith was rewarded with a promise of paradise in the company of the Redeemer Himself.

Though salvation is conditional on the repentant sinner turning to Christ, this beautiful passage give assurance that it is never too late to look to the Lord Jesus and live. It demonstrates that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ and is not dependent on any good works, rituals, man-made doctrines or legalistic requirements. It is faith in the Person, the Work and the Word of the Savior that secures for us the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting.

The door to paradise was unbarred and the gates of heaven were thrown wide open to this repentant sinner who hung next to our Lord, for he gained the paradise of God, simply because he trusted on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin—for as it is written “all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Dear God, today as I remember Your resurrection, I am thankful that You provided a path to everlasting life. By believing in you and surrendering to You I will join You one day in paradise forever. Knowing that makes the hard times and hurt of this world bearable. And it also reminds me to share this word with others. May my life be an example and my words point to You each day. In Jesus’ name, amen.