

ResKidz Lenten Devotional

THE LIGHT OF EASTER



I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will never walk in
darkness, but will have the light of life.

John 8:12

Dear Parents,

Lent in many ways has gotten a bad rap. The idea of giving something up for the 40+ days before Easter in some ways has become highly ritualistic and unattached from what the season really is about. People abstain from certain foods or vices with a desire not to draw closer to God, but to lose weight, be a better person, or even as a way to earn forgiveness. Others attempt to sacrifice because of a desire to win the approval of man or from a distorted view of obligation. On the other extreme, Easter in many ways has become a holiday for consumers. Jellybeans, eggs, and bunnies encourage us to bypass the crucifixion and instead focus on cultural icons ties more closely to sugar and spring than anything else.

Lent is about the gospel. It is...

- a time for us to slow down and focus on the work of Christ.
- a season to repent from sin and trust in His work on the cross.
- a reminder that the empty tomb only comes through the cross.
- meant to help us prepare ourselves for the joy of the resurrection as we enter into the sorrow and pain that came first.
- a reminder that we live in the ‘already, but not yet’.

Lent lasts 40 days excluding Sundays, which makes it about 46 days altogether. This season, we invite your family to participate in a weekly devotional designed to help prepare your family to celebrate the fullness of what Easter truly is. Each week, you will participate in a brief scripture reading, discussions, and prayer time. We encourage you to get a set of seven tea lights, votives, or other candles to use as a visual reminder of the darkness of sin and later the living hope of Easter. Instead of lighting a candle a week like we do in Advent, we will extinguish a candle each week as we contemplate the brokenness of sin and Jesus’ journey toward the cross. During the last week, we will relight all 7 candles as a way to celebrate the promise both of the resurrection and what it ultimately points to—the day when Jesus returns to make all things new.

ResKidz Team

*Devotional written by and reproduced (with modifications) with permission of Emily Pilkington and Alice Jenkins, The Crossing Church.

Week 1 (Genesis 1)

Introduction

What is your favorite thing about Easter? (Take responses.)

During the next 8 weeks, we are going to prepare for Easter together as a family. We are going to celebrate a season called Lent. Lent is all about preparing our hearts to celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection. Each week, we'll read and talk about a passage in the Bible and use these seven candles to help us remember what Easter is really all about. Tonight's story comes from the very beginning of the Bible. Let's take a look at it together now.

Bible Discussion

Choose **one** of the following options to read the story together or paraphrase Genesis 1 as needed for the age of your children.

- "A New World" from The Rhyme Storybook Bible p. 6-21 (Toddlers/Preschool)
- "The Beginning: A Perfect Home" from The Jesus Storybook Bible p. 18-27 (Late Preschool/Elementary)
- "In the Beginning" from The Action Bible p. 17-20 (Elementary)
- Genesis 1 (Elementary and older)

What were some of the things God created?

What did God say after He created these things? (*It was very good.*)

In the beginning God created **EVERYTHING!** Planets and stars and plants and trees and animals and fish, even people. Everything in God's creation was **PERFECT!** There was no sickness, no death, no fighting, no anger or jealousy. Just like He said, it was **VERY** Good!

Candle Time

Tonight, we're going to light all seven of our lent candles together.

(*Light all seven candles.*)

These seven candles represent God's perfect, complete creation. In the beginning everything really was very good. It was absolutely perfect.

Have kids act out the different things God created or create a family collage of these things together.

Did you know that in the Bible, the number seven is used to represent something that is perfect and complete?

Prayer Time

Father,

You are our Creator King! In the beginning you created the heavens and the earth. In the beginning you created the land and oceans, the plants and the animals. In the beginning, Lord you created people in your image. Your works are wonderful and beyond what we can fully understand. Thank you for sharing your creation with us. *Amen.*

Have each person in the family take turns praising God for something He created.

Week 2 (Genesis 3:1-19)

(Light all 7 candles to begin your time together.)

Introduction

Last week, we took a closer look at the creation story. What were some of the different things God created? *(Take responses.)*

After creating each of those things. God said something. Do you remember what he said?
(It is good.)

We read that God's creation in the Garden of Eden was absolutely perfect. No sickness.
No death. No fighting.

Is this the way things are today? *(No.)*

Let's read more to find out why this is.

Bible Discussion

Choose one of the following options to read the story together or paraphrase Genesis 3:1-19 as needed for the age of your children.

- "A Snake in the Garden" from The Rhyme Storybook Bible p. 22-35 (Toddlers/Preschool)
- "The Terrible Lie" from the Jesus Storybook Bible p. 28-36 (Late Preschool/Elementary)
- "Tempted in the Garden" from The Action Bible p. 21-23 (Elementary)
- Genesis 3:1-19 (Elementary and older)

What happened to God's perfect creation? *(Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Sin entered God's perfect creation. The world is no longer perfect. God's perfect relationship with Adam and Eve is also broken.)*

Candle Time

(Blow out one of the seven candles so that six remain lit.)

Last week, we lit all seven of the candles to represent God's perfect creation. Tonight, we blew out one of the candles to represent the darkness of sin entering the world.

I love that even at the end of tonight's story, God didn't just end with sadness, but with a promise. A promise He would keep at Easter. Each week, we will continue to see both the darkness of sin and the hope of this great promise.

For the next few weeks, we are going to talk quite a bit about sin. It might be helpful to use the following definition:

Sin: Not loving God or other perfectly with our hearts, words, or actions.

Prayer Time

God,

Even on the very day that sin broke your perfect world, you had a plan. We thank you for this great rescue plan and that you didn't end tonight's story just with sadness, but with a promise. Help us to see our sin for what it is. Please forgive us. *Amen.*

Perhaps take a moment for silent confession. Have everyone take a moment to silently pray about a sin.

Week 3 (Psalm 51)

(Light six of the seven candles to begin your time together.)

Introduction

Last week we saw how sin broke God's perfect creation and our relationship with Him. We blew one of our candles out to help us think about the darkness of sin.

Do you remember what sin is? (*Sin is not loving God or others perfectly with our thoughts, words, or actions.*)

What are some things that people do when they sin/do something wrong? (*Try to hide it, blame someone else, try to make it look or sound like it's not that big a deal, lie about it, ask for forgiveness, etc.*)

Bible Discussion

A man named David wrote tonight's Bible passage. Can you think of anything you know about him? (*Take responses.*)

David was a great king of Israel. You might remember him from the story of David and Goliath or know him as someone who wrote many of the beautiful songs in the Book of Psalms. The Bible even calls David "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22) The Bible also tells us that while David was a great king, he was also a great sinner. In fact, the Book of 2 Samuel shows us that David was also a thief and a murderer! How could someone who did such terrible things be a man after God's own heart? Psalm 51 tells us. Let's read this together now.

Read Psalm 51:1-2

What does David ask God to do when he sins? (*Have mercy on him. Wash him clean and take away his sin.*)

Read Psalm 51:1-12

What does David ask God to do when he sins? (*Give him a clean heart and a right spirit. Not send him away/take the Holy Spirit from him. Restore the joy of salvation to him.*)

David was a great sinner who also knew he had a great Savior. He tried to cover up his sin with lies like so many people do. He quickly realized that this only makes things worse. Instead, he came to God, confessed his sin, and asked God to give him a new heart. That's exactly what we should do when we sin as well.

For grown-ups: Paul Tripp has a great book called *Whiter than Snow* that features 52 short daily devotions on Psalm 51.

Consider using this in your own time with God.

Parents: Consider sharing a specific example from your own life here.

Extra Option: Consider reading "David's Sin" & "David's Punishment" on p. 322-328 in *The Action Bible* to learn more about David's great sin.

What's in the Bible?

Video (Volume 5: Israel Get's A King) also does a great job retelling the story from 2 Samuel in a way that is developmentally appropriate and ties in Psalm 51.

Extra Option:

Consider reading all of Psalm 51 with older kids. Use the same discussion questions.

Extra Info: Repent- to turn away from sin and turn to God.

Bonus Questions:

Based on what we read, what do you think David knows/believes about God?

(He's forgiving and compassionate. He can be honest about who he is and what he has done, even when it is bad. That God alone has the power to make him new again.)

Candle Time

(Blow out one of the six remaining candles so that five remain lit.)

David's life and Psalm 51 reminds us that sin is a big deal. It breaks our relationship with each other and with God. There is only one thing to do when we sin - repent.

Prayer Time

Have mercy on us, Oh God, because of your unfailing love.
Against you and you alone have we done what is wrong.
Create in us a clean heart, Oh God. Wash us and we will be white as snow.
Give us the joy of your salvation. Make us willing to obey you.

Extra Option:

Consider listening to "Psalm 51 (Wisdom in the Secret Heart)" by Shane & Shane or singing "Create in Me a Clean Heart" by Keith Green.

Week 4 (Isaiah 53)

(Light five of the seven candles to begin your time together.)

Introduction

Last week we learned that David was a great sinner who knew that he had a great Savior. We learned that blaming, lying, and covering up our sin only creates more problems. The only solution for sin is to repent and ask God for his forgiveness and mercy like David did in Psalm 51.

Tonight, we're going to get one step closer to hearing God's great rescue plan and solution for sin. We're going to hear a special message from a man named Isaiah. Isaiah is one of God's prophets, or people who share special messages from God to his people. In this prophecy he describes what it will be like for Jesus when He saves His people from sin. He did this over 700 years before Jesus was born!

Consider watching "What's in the Bible" (Volume 9: God Speaks!) Prophets Part 2 or reading "Operation No More Tears" on p. 144-151 of *The Jesus Storybook Bible* for more background info on Isaiah.

Bible Discussion

Read Isaiah 53:3

How did people respond to Jesus? (*People looked down on Him. They didn't accept Him and turned their faces away from Him.*)

Read Isaiah 53:4-6

What did Jesus do? (*He suffered the things that we should have suffered. He took on our pain and was pierced, crushed, and punished for us. He healed us with his wounds! We were like sheep and wandered from God and went our own way! God placed our sin on Jesus!*)

Extra Option:
Consider reading all of Isaiah 53 with older kids. Use the same discussion questions.

Candle Time

(Blow out one of the five remaining candles so that four remain lit.)

Once again, we see that sin is a big deal. Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages or what we earn for sin is death! Tonight we saw that the suffering, punishment, and death that we earned for our sin was placed on Jesus. It crushed Him and cost Jesus His very life.

Later on in Isaiah 53:11-12, God gives us this great promise about Jesus' death and resurrection. He says, "After he suffers, he will see the light that leads to life...My godly servant will make many people godly because of what he will accomplish...He took the sins of many people on himself and he gave his life to those who had done what is wrong."

During the next four weeks, we will hear the story of how Jesus does this over 700 years after Isaiah wrote down these words from God.

Prayer Time

Jesus,
You have suffered the things we should have suffered.
You took on the pain that should have been ours.
We are like sheep. We have wandered away from God.
We have turned our own way. By your wounds we are healed.
Thank you for giving your perfect life in our place.
Amen.

Extra Option: Listen to the worship song "Isaiah 53" by Sovereign Grace Music or "Suffering Servant" by Dustin Kensrue

Week 5

(Light four of the seven candles to begin your time together.)

Introduction

Last week we heard the prophet Isaiah describe what Jesus would have to go through to save us from sin. Tonight we're going to see how this prophecy begins to come true.

If someone asked you what a king was like, how would you describe him?
(Take responses.)

Tonight, we're going to see Jesus as a different kind of king. Jesus is the most powerful man who ever walked the face of the earth, yet in today's story, we see him humble himself to the place of a servant.

Bible Discussion

Choose **one** of the following options to read the story together or paraphrase Luke 22:1-34 as needed for the age of your children.

- "Washing the Disciples Feet" from The Beginner's Bible p.437-441 (Toddler/Preschool)
- "The Servant King" from The Jesus Storybook Bible p. 347-441 (Late Preschool/Elementary)
- "Passover Problems" from The Action Bible p. 619-622 (Elementary)
- Luke 22:1-34 (Elementary)

What does Jesus do with His disciples? (*He serves them the Passover meal in a new way. He washes their feet and talks about how the greatest one is the one who serves.*)

How do the disciples respond to Jesus? (*One name Judas leaves to betray Jesus. He leaves the room and goes to help the leaders capture Jesus. Another, Peter struggles to let Jesus wash his feet. All of them have a hard time understanding what's going on.*)

Extra Option: Take turns washing each other's feet.

Candle Time

(Blow out one of the four remaining candles so that three remain lit.)

In today's story, we see Jesus serving the disciples. In Mark 10:45 Jesus says, "For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

During the next few weeks, we'll see Jesus serve us in the greatest way possible - he'll give his life for us.

Prayer Time

Jesus,

Thank you for coming as a servant. Thank you for coming as the one who willingly suffered and died in our place. *Amen.*

Week 6 (Luke 22:39-71)

(Light three of the seven candles to begin your time together.)

Introduction

Last week, we saw how Jesus served his disciples by washing their feet. We saw that one of his closest friends betrayed him and helped those who wanted to kill Jesus. Tonight, we're going to see the next part of God's rescue plan.

Bible Discussion

*Choose **one** of the following options to read the story together or paraphrase Luke 22:39-71 as needed for the age of your children.*

- "The Last Supper" from The Beginner's Bible p. 422-445 (Toddlers/Preschool)
- "A Dark Night in the Garden" from The Jesus Storybook Bible p. 294-301 (Late Preschool/Elementary)
- "The Lord's Supper" and "On Trial" from The Action Bible p. 623-630 (Elementary)
- Luke 22:39-71 (Elementary and older)

How did Jesus feel in tonight's story? (*He was afraid, sad, and overwhelmed.*)

What did He do? (*He went and prayed to His Father and asked if there was any other way that God could get His children back. He said not my will, but yours. He endured the beatings. People made fun of and mocked Him.*)

Candle Time

(Blow out one of the three remaining candles so that two remain lit.)

Remember when we read Isaiah 53 a few weeks ago? It told us that Jesus was despised and rejected by men. It told us that he carried our griefs and our sorrows. Because of His great love, He willingly faced the punishment that would bring us peace.

Prayer Time

Jesus,

Thank you for your great love for us. Thank you for saying, "Whatever you say, I'll do," even when it meant giving your life for us. When we're afraid, help us to trust you. *Amen*

Extra Option: Listen to the song "Jesus Went to the Garden" by Derri Daugherty

Create a Resurrection Garden and discuss what Jesus prayed in the garden. [Search online for "Resurrection Garden Craft" for directions and pictures]

Week 7 (Luke 23:26-56)

(Light two of the seven candles to begin your time together.)

Introduction

What would it be like if the sun stopped shining? How would you feel if the entire world was dark?

In today's story, Jesus, the light of God, stopped shining. (*Blow out one candle so that only one remains.*)

Bible Discussion

Choose **one** of the following options to read the story together or paraphrase Luke 23:26-56 as needed for the age of your children.

- "The Day Jesus Died" from The Rhyme Bible Storybook p. 410-419 (Toddler/Preschool)
- "The Sun Stops Shining" from The Jesus Storybook Bible p. 302-309 (Late Preschool/Elementary)
- "Death Sentence" and "Crucified" from The Action Bible p. 631-640 (Elementary)
- Luke 23:26-56 (Elementary and older)

What happened in this part of the story? (*Jesus died on the cross. God's light stopped shining.*)

How does this part of God's story make you feel? (*Take responses.*)

Candle Time

(Blow out the last remaining candle so that only darkness remains.)

In tonight's story, it looks like the darkness had won. Jesus willingly took on our sin and died on the cross. Jesus' disciples couldn't understand how something like this could happen. It might also be difficult for our hearts today as well.

Thankfully, this is not the end of the story. Next week, we'll read and celebrate that John 8:12 is true, "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it."

Prayer Time

Jesus,

Thank you for loving us so much that you willingly suffered and died in our place. Thank you for taking on our sin so that we could have your righteousness. Please forgive us for our sin. Help us to believe and trust that your death paid the price for what we deserve. Amen.

Extra Option: Listen to or sing "How Deep the Father's Love for Us" together

Extra Option: Attend Tenebrae Service at Church of the Resurrection as a family. Good Friday, 7 p.m. (childcare provided for ages 0-5)

Tenebrae - Latin word meaning darkness or shadows.

Week 8 (Luke 24:1-12)

(Begin your time together with none of the candles lit.)

Introduction

What's the best story you've ever heard?

In this week's story, we'll truly hear the greatest news of all. News that Jesus followers could hardly believe. News they couldn't wait to share with others!

Extra Option: Watch "What's in the Bible: The Meaning of Easter"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQ7Dcw_Tl8

Bible Discussion

Choose one of the following options to read the story together or paraphrase Luke 24:1-12 as needed for the age of your children.

- "Jesus is Alive" from The Rhyme Bible Storybook p. 420-429 (Toddler/Preschool)
- "God's Wonderful Surprise" from the Jesus Storybook Bible p. 310-317 (Late Preschool/Elementary)
- "The Sealed Tomb" from The Action Bible p. 641-644 (Elementary)
- Luke 24:1-12 (Elementary and older)

Did Jesus stay dead? (*No, He came back to life!*)

Why is it important that Jesus came back to life? (*Jesus proved he was God by doing something that no other human can do - overcoming death. Therefore we can trust that Jesus has defeated sin and the consequences of sin forever like he promised.*)

Candle Time

(Relight all seven candles)

At Easter, we see that God kept his promise of long ago to rescue us from sin and make us his children once again. For those who believe, Jesus is the Light of Easter who has overcome the darkness. Jesus' resurrection also gives us hope as well. Because Jesus beat the darkness of sin and death, those who believe in Jesus don't have to be afraid of those things either. That is the good news of Easter for you and me!

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

Prayer Time

Jesus,

You are the light of the world! Your light shines in the darkness. The darkness can't overcome it! You are God and can do what only God can do! Thank you for Easter and what it means. Thank you for conquering the power of sin and death. Thank you for your promise that someday you will return and make all things new. We can't wait for that day. Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.