

DRAWNEAR

21 DAYS OF PREPARATION
FOR EASTER

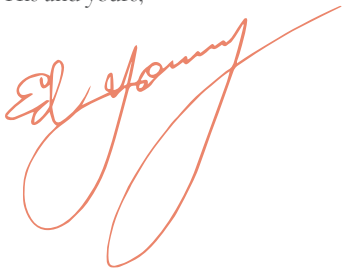
Dear Friends,

The sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the heart of the Christian faith. We serve a risen Savior who conquered sin and death so that we might have life everlasting. That is the good news of Easter, the Resurrection Day of Jesus.

This 21-Day Devotional Booklet has been created to serve as a companion for your prayer time as you prepare your heart to celebrate the Day of days. The selections are from various experiences, anecdotes, and teachings from my sermons. I pray they will be uplifting as you draw nearer to Him during this holy season, as well as helpful in developing a habit of greater intimacy with the Lord that will continue beyond Easter.

May God bless you and yours with His resurrection power.

His and yours,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read "Ed Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

DAY 1

HIGHER GROUND

"FOR I AM CONFIDENT OF THIS VERY THING, THAT HE WHO BEGAN A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL PERFECT IT UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST JESUS."

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

My dad had a country store. Every year, we would close down the store to take inventory. It was a tough job because we had to count every single thing in the store. Sometimes we need to be bold enough to take stock of our lives as well. If you're tired of what I call "comfortable Christianity" and truly want to grow and get onto higher ground with God, you need to take personal inventory. Get by yourself, just you and God, and invite Him to shine the light of His truth into every corner of your life. It's exacting and it takes courage but it will be a thrilling step toward freedom and victory in your daily walk with God.

Invite God to search every corner of your life and help you move away from any tendency toward complacency or comfortable Christianity.

NUMBER YOUR DAYS

"SO TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS, THAT WE MAY PRESENT TO YOU A HEART OF WISDOM." PSALM 90:12

Recently, I was talking with a man who is at church whenever the doors are open. He told me he had been away from the Lord for 64 years, and now that he has found Christ, he wants as much of Him as he can possibly get. You see, he is making up for lost time – for the years that passed without salvation, peace, and fullness. Today's scripture tells us we are to number, or measure, our days, so we can present to God a heart of wisdom and a life of meaning. Do you number your days? Do you focus on eternal things as much or even more than the things of this world? Remember, only what you – and only what I – do for God in Christ will stand the test of time.

Circle today's date on a calendar, then commit to make each day going forward "count" for God.

DO YOU LOVE GOD?

“AND BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE COME TO
KNOW HIM, IF WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.”

I JOHN 2:3

Do you love God? I would be quite surprised if you said “No.” In fact, I believe most people would reply, “Yes, I most certainly love God.” But, there is a simple test that tells us how much we really love God. The test has nothing to do with church attendance or time spent in prayer or Bible study or singing praise songs. Instead, it has everything to do with obedience. “*If you love Me,*” Jesus said, “*you will keep My commandments.*” Obedience is God’s “love test.” With that in mind, let me ask you again, “Do you love God?”

*Ask God to help you pass His “love test”
with flying colors.*

SPIRITUAL BATTLES

"...FOR THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT OF THE FLESH, BUT DIVINELY POWERFUL FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF FORTRESSES." 2 CORINTHIANS 10:4

In every life there is a Jericho. You know what that is? It is that thing that would block you from becoming all that God wants you to be. Whether it is a besetting sin, a habit, or an attitude, our Jericho will block our way to the full blessing of God. As long as we try to scale the walls and knock them down using our own resources, we will fail. We cannot win spiritual battles with weapons we have borrowed from the world's arsenals. Instead, recognize how impossible it is to handle the situation on our own. Then, just be patient, be quiet, and soon – at God's command – you will be able to shout the shout of faith that will bring the wall crashing down.

Think about a battle you've been trying to win by yourself. Tell God about it and thank Him, in advance, for the victory He will give in His time and in His way.

TALKING TO YOU

"I WILL NEVER FORGET YOUR PRECEPTS, FOR BY THEM YOU HAVE PRESERVED MY LIFE." PSALM 119:93

We are Phi Beta Kappa in rationalization, in being defensive, and in blaming others. We put things in our closet of forgetfulness rather than deal with truth, even when it is piercing and accurate. I remember a cartoon years ago. It showed the pastor, and his arm was about 30 feet long. It extended all the way to the back row of the church. His finger was pointing right at a man seated there, and the man's wife punched him and said, "I think he's talking about you." Is God using something – or someone – to get your attention? He loves you so much He will use almost any means possible to communicate His truth to you. Commit right now to receive it and to act on it.

Be still for a few minutes and ask yourself if God is using someone, or something, to get your attention. If so, thank God for His persistence, then ask Him to reveal the message He has prepared specifically for you today.

AN INDEPENDENT AUDIT

"SEARCH ME, O GOD, AND KNOW MY HEART; TRY ME AND KNOW MY ANXIOUS THOUGHTS..." PSALM 139:23

Corporations have long recognized the value of an independent audit to uncover any financial wrongdoing and identify assets and liabilities. This kind of honest, intentional assessment makes positive change possible. In the same way, through the process of confession, we are "independently audited" by God Himself. When our wrongdoing is revealed, we become aware of our need for forgiveness in specific areas. Then, through confession and turning away from the sins God reveals to us, we take steps to prevent them from happening again. So, why not take some time alone today and ask God to audit your life and show you the results. He wants to help you make positive changes that will strengthen you as an asset to the Kingdom and keep you close to Him.

Reach out to God and ask Him to give you the courage to undertake an honest inventory of your life.

DAY 7

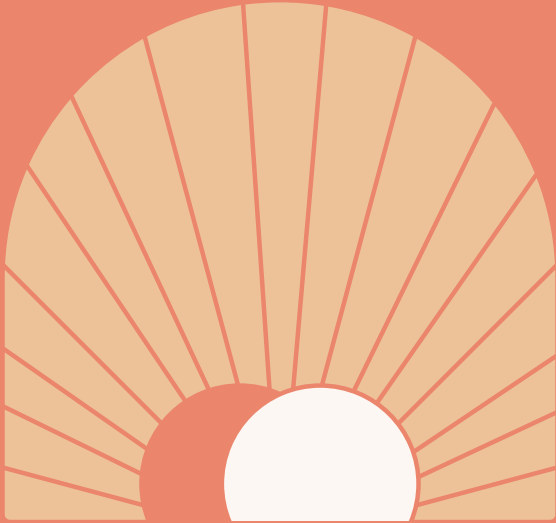
SUNDAY

"ASCRIBE TO THE LORD THE GLORY DUE TO HIS
NAME; WORSHIP THE LORD IN HOLY ARRAY."

PSALM 29:2

God has given us seven days in each week, but He asks us to take one day out of the week to rest, to reflect, to recover, and to worship Him. Don't treat this day like every other day of the week. Sunday should be a joyful time, a privileged time. Set aside this special day to give honor and glory to the Almighty who has given us everything!

One of the oldest living things in the world is the Sequoia tree. You never see a sequoia tree by itself. These trees grow in clusters, with their roots intertwined with the roots of other trees so they can withstand even a strong storm. That sounds a lot like the fellowship of the church, doesn't it? We come together in worship, we listen to one another and relate to one another. We laugh together and share one another's sorrow. And most of all, we grow together as we devote ourselves to the fellowship of the Body of Christ. Spend this Sunday in corporate worship and fellowship with believers.



WEEK TWO

HOPELESSLY STAINED

“COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER,” SAYS THE LORD. “THOUGH YOUR SINS ARE AS SCARLET, THEY WILL BE AS WHITE AS SNOW; THOUGH THEY ARE RED LIKE CRIMSON, THEY WILL BE AS WOOL.” ISAIAH 1:18

You are about to make an all-important presentation at work when you notice it – an ink stain the size of a baseball on your crisp white shirt. Nothing you do will hide or remove the mark. You are hopelessly stained! Every person alive is sin-stained, and there is nothing we can do ourselves to hide or remove it. Only Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is equipped to remove sin’s stain. The good news is that Jesus is in the cleaning business! His clean-up procedure is called salvation, and it takes place when we, by faith, receive Jesus Christ into our life. So, call on Him and confess your sin. He will clean – and keep on cleaning – you from sin’s stain.

Thank God that He is in the cleaning business. Take a moment to confess anything in your life that only His loving and gracious “stain remover” can erase.

SECOND CHANCES

“THE LORD’S LOVINGKINDNESSES INDEED NEVER
CEASE, FOR HIS COMPASSIONS NEVER FAIL.
THEY ARE NEW EVERY MORNING. GREAT IS YOUR
FAITHFULNESS.” LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23A

Lou Gehrig was one of the greatest baseball players in history. On one occasion, after taking a pitch that was called “strike three,” he had a word with the umpire before heading back to the dugout. After the game, reporters asked the umpire what Lou had said. The ump replied, “He said, ‘I wish I had that one over again.’” How many times in life have you and I echoed those same words? Scripture assures us that, although we can’t go back, we can begin again...every day. So, look for assurances of God’s unceasing lovingkindnesses and unfailing compassion today. He is giving you and me a much-needed second chance.

*Thank God for His lovingkindness and for the
opportunity to experience His compassion and
faithfulness every day.*

PARCHED!

"I STRETCH OUT MY HANDS TO YOU; MY SOUL LONGS FOR YOU, AS A PARCHED LAND." PSALM 143:6

We all go through droughts – dry periods in our lives. This was true of David in our scripture passage. His dryness was not due to a physical thirst for water. Instead, David was spiritually parched. He said his cure was to “spread out his hands” to God, meaning he prayed. When we are parched, praying is not high on our priority list, but digging the well of worshipful prayer is the way to quench the thirst of a dry heart. So, when you experience spiritual drought, set aside time to wait in God’s presence. Immerse yourself in the worship of the Most High. Stretch yourself out before Him so He can rain on your parched heart and spiritually renew your soul.

The next time it rains, step outside and stand in the rain for a minute or two. Then thank God that He sends spiritual rain and refreshment in the same way that He provides the physical rain to water the earth.

TAKE A COFFEE BREAK

"AND AFTER HE HAD SENT THE MULTITUDES AWAY, HE WENT UP TO THE MOUNTAIN BY HIMSELF TO PRAY; AND WHEN IT WAS EVENING, HE WAS THERE ALONE." MATTHEW 14:23

When I was a boy, we had an old radio that had been in our family for a long time. On occasion, static would come on that radio, and my dad would just smack the side of it to make the static go away. Could it be that when storms or difficulties come into our lives that God is just "slapping us" on the side of the head as if to say, "I want you to slow down and get quiet, just for a moment, because I have something to say and you're so filled with static you can't hear Me speak." Build a little silence into your life today. Go outside with a cup of coffee, or step outside at night and just breathe in the night air. Solitude is a rare commodity, but how we need it in our daily lives.

Turn down the volume on the things that are filling your mind and consuming your thoughts right now. Only then will you be ready to hear God clearly.

OPEN DOORS

"AT THE SAME TIME, PRAY ALSO FOR US, THAT GOD MAY OPEN FOR US A DOOR FOR THE WORD, TO DECLARE THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST..." COLOSSIANS 4:3

Fanny Crosby was one of the most prolific hymn writers in history. Although blind from infancy, she composed thousands of songs and poems, became a teacher, and worked in rescue missions. While some may have regarded her blindness as a closed door in her life, Fanny used her blindness as an opportunity to share the Word of God. Do you feel that God has closed a door in your life? It may or may not be a physical infirmity like Fanny's. It may be in your vocation, in a relationship, or even in your life's dream. Whatever the situation, your closed door may actually be God's "open-door" opportunity for you to share His Word and declare the life-changing truth of Jesus Christ.

God can use you no matter what your present circumstances may be. Ask Him to show you the open doors He is providing for you to tell others about His love and what Christ has done for them.

DIVINE MATH

"BUT MARTHA WAS DISTRACTED BY ALL THE PREPARATIONS THAT HAD TO BE MADE." LUKE 10:40

Far too often we relate to Martha and feel that we are too busy to take time to pray. But I have found that something supernatural happens the moment you spend time in Bible study and prayer. Just as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish, He can multiply the time we spend with Him. Try it. Spend quality time with God and see how He will extend your day. Your mind will be clearer, and you will accomplish more. God takes the time we spend with Him and multiplies it to help us meet the challenges of the day.

In the remaining days before Easter, set aside some extra time each day to spend time in prayer. Don't let anything distract you from this important discipline.

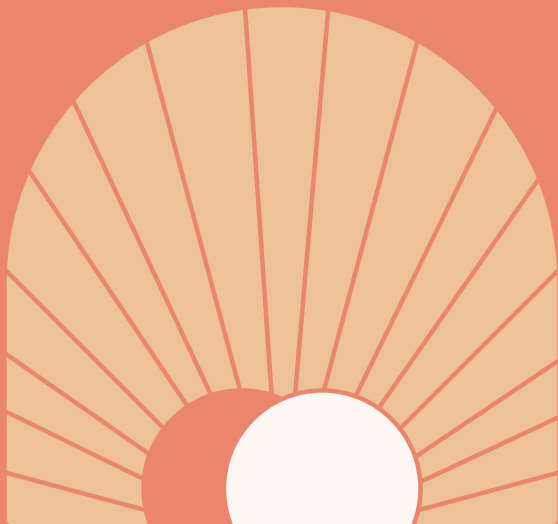
DAY 14

PALM SUNDAY

“AND AS HE WAS NOW APPROACHING, NEAR THE DESCENT OF THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, THE WHOLE MULTITUDE OF THE DISCIPLES BEGAN TO PRAISE GOD JOYFULLY WITH A LOUD VOICE FOR ALL THE MIRACLES WHICH THEY HAD SEEN, SAYING, ‘BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; PEACE IN HEAVEN AND GLORY IN THE HIGHEST!’”

LUKE 19:37-38

What is a Christian? It is someone who has had his own Palm Sunday experience. Did you know that? If you have had your own Palm Sunday experience, that means you have invited Jesus to come and to ride into your life and take over your life as King and as Lord. John 1:12 states that *“as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”* Ride on, King Jesus. Ride into my life.



PASSION
WEEK

HE PAID FOR IT

“THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE; BUT PERFECT LOVE
CASTS OUT FEAR...” 1 JOHN 4:18A

Have you ever been in a store with a sign that read, “If you break it, you’ll pay for it”? Usually the store is filled with all kinds of fragile things made of glass or pottery, and you tend to walk through the store on tiptoe, fearful that you may break something. God doesn’t operate that way. If He had a store, it would have a different kind of sign on it. Through His sacrificial death on the Cross, Jesus demonstrated that we no longer need to live or walk in fear. Instead, He declares, “If you break something – if your life is broken – tell Me about it, and I’ll forgive you.”

Isaiah 53:5 states that Christ was “pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities.” Read Isaiah 53 this week, and thank God that Jesus was willing for His body to be broken in order that our broken lives could be put back together.

OPEN YOUR MOUTH

"NOW ON THE LAST DAY, THE GREAT DAY OF THE FEAST, JESUS STOOD AND CRIED OUT, SAYING, 'IF ANY MAN IS THIRSTY, LET HIM COME TO ME AND DRINK.'" JOHN 7:37

To understand spiritual thirst, imagine an individual in the desert. His canteen is empty, his lips are parched, and he is desperate for water. Just as God provided water in the wilderness to quench the physical thirst of His people, Jesus offers living water to quench our spiritual thirst. Psalm 81 says, "*Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.*" The genius of the Christian life is opening your mouth, your heart, and your life wide – and just drinking that water of the Spirit. Suddenly you will begin not only to live, but also experience the power of God in every area of your life.

As we approach Good Friday and are reminded of all that Jesus endured for us on the Cross, recall that He experienced excruciating physical thirst in order to provide the Living Water that quenches our spiritual thirst.

RESTORED

“FOR THERE IS ONE GOD, AND ONE MEDIATOR ALSO BETWEEN GOD AND MEN, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS, WHO GAVE HIMSELF AS A RANSOM FOR ALL, THE TESTIMONY GIVEN AT THE PROPER TIME.” 1 TIMOTHY 2:5-6

In Genesis, we are told that Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden of Eden. Imagine the fellowship and joy they experienced! But that all ended when they disobeyed God and ate from the forbidden tree. It is here we learn that the tragic result of sin is not a broken rule, but a broken relationship. Yet God, in His grace and mercy, has provided a way to restore our relationship and fellowship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ. The finished work of Jesus on the Cross is God's invitation to come to Him and to know Him. It is an invitation to anyone and everyone. Have you replied?

Thank God for sending His Son, Jesus, who endured the pain of the Cross and paid the penalty for your sin, making it possible for you to experience the joy of a relationship with Him.

IN THE GARDEN

"FATHER, IF YOU ARE WILLING, TAKE THIS CUP FROM ME; YET NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE."

LUKE 22:42

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus asked the Father, "*If Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me.*" What do you think Jesus saw in that cup? I think He saw Hell itself - all the trash, the chicanery, the hypocrisy, the sin...all the filth of humanity. He saw your sin and mine. Can you imagine how terrible that would be? It wasn't the physical act of crucifixion, as horrible and shameful as that was. But as He looked in the cup, He saw all that would come upon Him, the price that must be paid as He became our Substitute. Love compelled Him to endure it all for us. Despite His agony, He then prayed, "*Not My will, but Thine be done.*"

Let the power and the wonder of Romans 5:8 dwell in your heart and mind: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

IN GOOD HANDS

“AND JESUS, CRYING OUT WITH A LOUD VOICE, SAID, ‘FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.’ AND HAVING SAID THAT, HE BREATHED HIS LAST.” LUKE 23:46

As we go to the Cross, we recall that the Gospels record the “seven last words” of Jesus from the Cross. When we study these statements, we begin to comprehend, better perhaps than in any other biblical account, the very heart of God. The final word from the Cross is one of the greatest words of all. It is a prayer and this prayer is the very essence of the Christian life. It is about surrender. Jesus prayed “*Into Thy hands, I commit My Spirit,*” that is, “I surrender all.” As we learn to surrender our all to the Lord Jesus Christ, we just extend our arms and surrender all that we are to Him. He will catch us every time.

Thank God today that the Christian life is not about “trying” to be a Christian, or working harder, or doing anything – it is about surrender. When we surrender our all to God, we can know without a doubt that we are in good hands.

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

"MY SOUL WAITS IN SILENCE FOR GOD ONLY; FROM HIM IS MY SALVATION." PSALM 62:1

On the Saturday between the sorrow of Jesus' crucifixion and the joy of His resurrection, there was silence. Imagine the disciples struggling with fear and doubt, trying to make sense of all that had transpired. In the silent seasons of life when it seems as if God is not speaking or moving, do you find yourself fearful and doubtful, filling your heart and mind with noise and distractions? Or are you able to lean into the silence, trusting that God is still working and moving? Silence enables us to surrender control and learn to trust our Heavenly Father, who sees and knows all. So, let me encourage you to spend time alone with no agenda other than to be still, be quiet, and wait on God in silence.

Silence is hard for most of us. Set a timer for five minutes, then sit in silence until the timer goes off. Gradually increase the time increments until you can sit quietly for 15 minutes. God will meet you in the stillness.

DAY 21

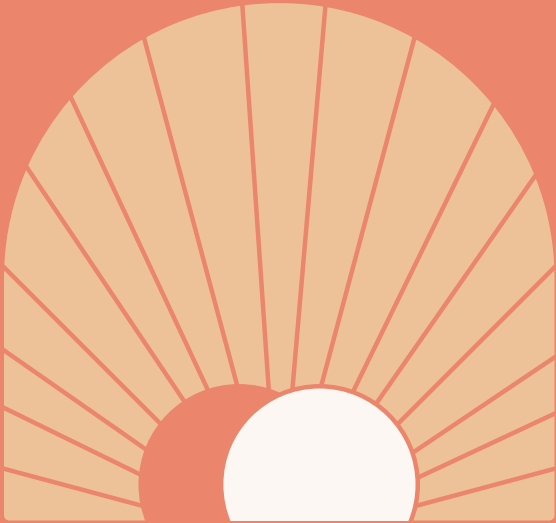
EASTER SUNDAY

"FOR I DELIVERED TO YOU AS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE
WHAT I ALSO RECEIVED, THAT CHRIST DIED FOR OUR
SINS ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES, AND THAT
HE WAS BURIED, AND THAT HE WAS RAISED ON THE
THIRD DAY ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES..."

I CORINTHIANS 15:3-4

Christ is Risen! He is Risen, indeed! Once you grasp the truth of the Resurrection, there will be a passion in your life to worship the Living Lord. There will be a freedom and a lightness in your life because all fear of this life and of death has been eliminated. And you will have a story to tell. Because He lives, we too shall live!

CHRIST
IS RISEN!



“DRAW NEAR
TO GOD AND
HE WILL
DRAW NEAR
TO YOU.”

JAMES 4:8

CELEBRATE
EASTER
WITH THE
SECOND FAMILY!

VISIT [SECOND.ORG/EASTER](https://second.org/easter)
FOR WORSHIP TIMES AND
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