



Weekly Devotional

A ministry of Chapel Hill

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This guide pairs with Mark 16:1-8 and the sermon preached at Chapel Hill April 20-21.



Written by Serena Blair

Worship leader at Chapel Hill. Jesus is the King of my heart. I love being John's wife, proud to get the title "Mama" to twin girls, and have been a hairdresser my entire adult life. I have a passion to live out my faith and not hoard it. I love God's Word. It is the plumb bob, the vertical reference line written straight from the loving heart of Father God to our hearts and the depth of our souls. For fun: I love family, people, yummy coffee, vacation, fashion (yes!), and all things salty.

LifeGroup Guide

Head

Compare and contrast the original ending of Mark's gospel with the ending of the other Synoptics (Matthew and Luke). What is similar and what is different?

The women were told to go and tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus was going before them to Galilee, and that they would see him there. What is Jesus' commission to all of his followers?

Heart

When you read this story, and picture yourself in the midst of it, how do you imagine you might feel, experiencing what the women experienced?

The women are described as "seeking Jesus" (v. 6). When you search your heart, how would you describe your desire for Jesus? Are you hungry, actively seeking, or more complacent? Look together at the description of the different churches in Revelation, and what Jesus' words are to each.

Hands

The women's response was to go and flee. They were trembling, astonished and fearful. As a result, they said nothing. What is your response today to the commission to "go and tell"?

We know the end of the story. The women must not have stayed quiet forever! How do you think they overcame their fear and chose to tell? What can you do to overcome your fears and do the same?

DAY 1 – Monday
Daily devotional

Read

John 11:55-57 - 12:1-7 (Countdown to the Cross)

Ask

This week, we will use our devotional to prepare our hearts for Easter. Let's look at Jesus' last week before his death and burial. I will pull out some stories that happened in that last week, but seriously this is the hardest task! This is the most historic moment in all of history and this journal could never do it justice!

How do we give expression to our feelings about Jesus? How would you describe your desire for Jesus?

Reflect

Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany to attend a dinner. His friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus were there. Bethany was the place he had raised Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus' resurrection was the final straw for the religious authorities, they wanted Jesus dead, and gave orders that if anyone knew where he was to report it so they might seize him. In contrast we read about Jesus' friends. They were not interested in these orders and instead hosted a dinner and their once dead brother reclined with Jesus at the table.

Verses 3-7: Let's picture this scene. In the midst of the supper, Mary gave a remarkable gift to Jesus. It wasn't unusual to wash the feet of a guest, but it was unusual to do it during the meal itself, to use very costly oil, and to wipe the feet with one's hair.

Many years ago my cousin and I took our families to the mountains to play in the snow. Her toddler son's feet had gotten too cold. He was miserable and I remember watching her try desperately to warm them as he cried. She eventually slipped his sock off and put his little foot in her mouth. I remember thinking, whoa! That mama was desperate to soothe her son and she showed humility in the way she sacrificed self-respect to help him.

Mary did the same. Mary showed humility. She used an oil that might have costed a year's wages (John 12:5). Her gift was also unselfconscious. She wiped his feet with her hair. This means she let down her hair in public, something Jewish women did not do. Mary's heart went out to the Lord and she gave expression to something of her feelings in this beautiful touching act.

This makes me ask the question, what do I do to give expression to my feelings for Jesus? Do I worry about what other people think? Are my actions unselfconscious? Do I hold back? What would I have done if I was at that table that night?

DAY 2 – Tuesday
Daily devotional

Read

John 12:12-19, Leviticus 23:33-44 (Countdown to the Cross)

Ask

What does “beseech” the Lord mean to you? Have you allowed Jesus to make a triumphal entry into your heart?

Reflect

Jesus’ reputation was widespread at this point. Pilgrims were making their way to Jerusalem for Passover and they hear he’s coming. So they took boughs of palms and hurried to meet him. Mosaic Law stated that palm branches were to be used for the Feast of Tabernacles also called Booths (Leviticus 23:33-44) and they were to take these beautiful boughs and celebrate. The Feast of Tabernacles served as a reminder of God’s provision. As Jesus made His triumphal entry, people waved palm fronds and proclaimed “Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel” (v. 13). At this point every messianic expectation is now at the point of realization. The word Hosanna is from Psalm 118:25-26: “O Lord, do save, we beseech You; O Lord, we beseech You, do send prosperity”.

Can you imagine being a Roman spectator watching this unfold? What was so triumphal about his entry anyway? It couldn’t compare to the kind of parade Julius Caesar had! One guy on a donkey versus a parade that lasted three days and made a spectacle of the captives and booty that was brought back. No, Jesus was a different kind of King. He would not conquer by force as earthly kings, but by love, grace, mercy, and his own sacrifice. That “one guy on a donkey” would ultimately be God’s once and for all complete provision for the all the world’s sin and give the gift of eternal life. Jesus is not a kingdom of armies and splendor, but of lowliness and servanthood. He doesn’t conquer nations but hearts and minds. His message is one of peace with God, not of temporal peace. If Jesus has made a triumphal entry into our hearts, he remains there in peace and love by his Holy Spirit. As his followers, we exhibit those same qualities, and the world sees the true King, living and reigning in triumph in us.

Have you allowed Jesus to make a triumphal entry into your heart? If so, what has changed since that day? If not, would you consider it? Jesus wants to lavish you with his love and he is humbly, patiently standing at the door of your heart waiting, all you have to do is open it.

DAY 3 – Wednesday

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 11:11-20, John 15:1-8 (Countdown to the Cross)

Ask

What visible fruit is there in your life? I know this is a rough question, maybe ask a real friend!
What is Jesus' commission to all His followers?

Reflect

After a day in Jerusalem Jesus and the twelve disciples go back to Bethany for the night. On their way back to Jerusalem Jesus sees a fig tree and goes to it because he is hungry. There was no fruit on the branches and he curses it. Right about now someone casually reading this passage would ask, why on earth did Jesus curse that fig tree? The key to understanding scripture is context! The passage (v. 13) says "seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf"—clearly this tree should've had fruit on it. You see, on a fig tree the fruit comes before the leaves. But things aren't always what they seem, are they? The presence of a fruitful fig tree was to be a symbol of blessing and prosperity for the nation of Israel. This one tree told a different story.

Context: Backing up to Mark 11:11, it says that the day before (on triumphal entry day) Jesus goes to the Temple and after looking around at everything he leaves. Moving forward to verse 15, Jesus entered the Temple and he was angry! The day before he had observed his Father's house as a den of robbers. I would imagine Jesus stewed all night about this when he spent the night in Bethany. So the next morning when he comes to a worthless fig tree it matches his thoughts on Israel and their so-called worship. People came spiritually hungry and there was nothing to feed them. Israel was outwardly spiritual with all the sacrifices and ceremonies, but inwardly they were spiritually barren because of their sin.

Our own lives reflect the fig tree in many ways. There should be fruit before the leaves. That fruit comes from what Jesus did for you. Romans 5:8 While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. If we truly believe in Jesus there should be visible fruit and not just an appearance of religiosity (fluffy leaves!). John 15:4 Jesus says, abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. There are people all around us that are hungry for Truth. Will we point them to the Bread of Life? Read Mark 16:15.

DAY 4 – Thursday
Daily devotional

Read

Matthew 21:12-13, Proverbs 31:8-9, Acts 4, 1 Cor. 6:19-20 (Countdown to the Cross)

Ask

What are you zealous for? Where does your passion and devotion lie?

Reflect

As we look at this last week of Jesus life we notice that he is holding nothing back. Jesus has brought his “A-game” and he was prepared to leave it all out there. The day Jesus entered the temple he disrupted the business of religion and in doing so drew the anger of the religious leaders who had already decided to kill him. Naturally Jesus, being zealous for God’s house and God’s children, took action. Jesus would not stand for such abuse upon those who sought to be closer to God. This theme carries throughout the Gospels. These were men and women coming to the temple in order to offer sacrifice to the Lord, and they were being taken advantage of. In that moment, Jesus showed himself again to be the voice to the voiceless and the defender of the defenseless. He caused a scene, ruffled feathers, and no doubt stirred hearts. His righteous anger led to a holy and teachable moment that would be repeated after his death, resurrection and ascension.

In Acts 4 we see His disciples preaching and demonstrating the same fire as Jesus. Peter and John have been making waves in the temple, healing a lame man and boldly proclaiming the message of Jesus and His resurrection. They, like their Master disrupted the religious order. Not to create dissension, but to set those held captive by an unreachable religious standard free and to receive the grace of God that comes from faith in Christ.

What are you zealous for? Where does your passion and devotion lie? For Jesus and his disciples it was all about serving the lost and broken, bringing hope and freedom to all who would receive it. The cleansing of the temple by Jesus allowed the presence of God once more to fill it. The cleansing of our heart by Jesus’ blood allows God’s Spirit to fill us. As Christ followers the Bible says we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Since our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit what cleansing needs to happen? Take time to today reflecting on what it means to have God’s Spirit within you.

DAY 5 – Friday
Daily devotional

Read

John 12:24-30, Romans 6:4-7 Galatians 2:20 (Countdown to the Cross)

Ask

What does new life feel like to you? What does seeking him look like? Jesus continues to use every moment to teach leading up to his crucifixion. In John 12 we see this little story inserted that he used to illustrate the necessity of his death and resurrection.

Reflect

I am a gardener of sorts and I like using seeds. The interesting thing about seeds is that they aren't plants. In fact the seed can do nothing on its own. It actually can sit for years and years and still be a seed. But when you let it fall to the earth and be planted the seed actually dies, it is no longer a seed. The single grain's death then leads to life as it releases the inner-life power that the rough outer husk has held captive, and this life-giving power multiplies itself in successive grains and will clothe the whole garden with a harvest! Isn't it fascinating!

Jesus was trying to explain to his audience just like a seed will never become a plant unless it dies and is buried, so the death and burial of Jesus was necessary to His glorification. Before there can be resurrection power and fruitfulness there must be death. When we ask Jesus into our hearts to rule and reign we are walking from death into life. We are a new creation. The old has passed away and the new has come. Let's look at it further in Romans 6:4-7. It says that we have become united with Jesus in the likeness of his death and we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection. Our old self was crucified with him in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so we will no longer be slaves to sin, for he who has died is freed from sin.

Read John 12:24-26. To be a Christian is to serve Jesus, to follow him. We must be willing to serve Jesus. (Some of you are translating that as busy-ness.) We are not saved by service, but we are saved to service. (Hard one.) Jesus said, where I am, there my servant will be also. This isn't forced slavery, this is chosen willing service that simply wants to be close to the Master. The reward for serving Jesus is to receive honor from God the Father. Read Mark 16:16a.

If you have experienced life in Jesus do you long to simply be with him? What does "with him" look like for you daily?

DAY 6 – Saturday
Daily devotional

Read

Matthew 17-30, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, John 13:1-17 (Countdown to the Cross)

Ask

How do you feel about communion? Is it just something we simply do, or is it more?

Reflect

This Passover would go down in history! It was the unfolding of a divine drama written, produced, and directed by God Himself to tell the story of His Son whom He loved and what He had planned all along to reunite us to him. Traditionally Passover is the celebration and remembrance of God’s deliverance for the Jewish people from their oppression in Egypt. After generations of celebration and remembrance we come to this very night. The symbols for Passover were to be songs, storytelling, eating lamb, drinking wine, and eating matzah bread (unleavened bread; leaven was a symbol for sin, so this bread was unleavened, and thus without sin). On this night there would be no lamb shank on the table, just unleavened bread and wine. You see, the sinless Lamb was the One reclining at the table.

Jesus didn’t change the time nor the hour of Passover and by doing this declared with full revelation that he was the Lamb of God and the bread was a symbol of his sinless body, the wine his blood. This was the Last Supper and Jesus told his disciples what He was about to do on the behalf of all mankind. Jesus was instituting a new covenant. The Last Supper brought the Old Testament observance of the Passover feast to its fulfillment. Now he would forge a new covenant in his blood.

Jesus’ words during the Last Supper about the unleavened bread and the cup echo what he said after he fed the 5,000. He said, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty—I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world—whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood will have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood real drink. (John 6:35, 51, 54-55).

Take, eat and remember are the words echoed for generations after this climactic night. When we think of the word remembrance, it is not to simply recall facts, but rather acknowledge the implication of Jesus giving his body and his blood once and for all time. We do not participate in the Lord’s Supper to gain his approval; we take part in it because we have his approval. How do you feel about communion? Do you consider it holy? What do you remember when you take it?

DAY 7 – Sunday
Daily devotional

Read

So many things happened between the Last Supper and Jesus' death. Take time to read these accounts: Matthew 26 27, Mark 14 and 15, Luke 22 and 23, John 17, 18, and 19. There is so much packed into these chapters that there are not enough days to write about them, but please read them! Jesus is the cornerstone of our faith and these passages are precious.

Ask

Will you worship or will you doubt?

Reflect

The world was cloaked in unnatural, early and consuming darkness the day Jesus died. There was no reason for the sun to shine. "The Light of the world" was temporarily extinguished. I wonder what happened in the disciples' hearts that day? Did they sit together and talk about what he meant to them? It's possible. They may have sat in complete silence, full of despair, fearful and confused. It had to be the darkest and most empty day.

"It is finished" was not the end. It was just the beginning, for greater things were yet to come! From Adam and Eve until the day Jesus rose from the grave, death held us ransom. But on the cross, sin and death were rendered powerless! Jesus' resurrection changed everything for mankind. If we are in Christ we are now free, restored, redeemed, and reconciled back to God. We've been given the free gift of eternal life! Mankind would never be separated from their Holy God again! The Spirit of Jesus Christ ripped the wall (that separated us from God) in two and made a way for us to touch God!

On the morning of Jesus resurrection some of the disciples worshipped while others doubted. We have to make the same decision today. Will you worship, or will you doubt? Will you get on your face and worship or give in to your fear?

The power and authority that Easter heralds should compel us all to go and make disciples. Once you have been told, you must go and tell! God's will for your life, and for my life, is to make disciples! The final truth of the resurrection story is that Jesus really is with you. He will be with you in all your tomorrows. We are sent out on the greatest task in all of history and are assured of the Greatest Presence that has ever lived on heaven or earth.
