



GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 12

CONVERSATION STARTER

What has been the most meaningful tradition or practice for you and your family to commemorate the events of Holy Week and Easter?

WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT GOOD FRIDAY?

Jesus endured unspeakable brutality and humiliation on the cross. How could this day ever be called *good*?

Hebrews 4:14-16 dares to answer just that question. As we journey through the gripping stories of Jesus' passion, it's helpful to look at other corners of Scripture to see how early Christians interpreted them. Our ancestors spent a lot of time pondering how the humanity and divinity of Jesus are related. The short answer is that, in Jesus, humanity and divinity are perfectly united and never mingled. The humanity of Jesus is perhaps never more important than on Good Friday. Some ancients thought Jesus might have just been a ghost who never really suffered, but the church strongly refuted that idea. The Son of God felt every painful piece of his passion: mental, emotional, physical, and even spiritual. This is why Hebrews was so adamant in proclaiming that "we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses." Instead, Jesus knows the depths of everything we feel, the good and the bad.

As Jesus yielded his spirit, Matthew tells us that the veil of the Temple was torn in two, signifying that the boundaries between us and God have now disappeared. Because of Good Friday, we have access to God without the need for more sacrifices or other priestly figures; Jesus took care of all of that once and for all. To rescue us from eternal darkness and despair, Jesus gave up his life.

In the early history of worship, a tradition developed of keeping a vigil in memory of Jesus' passion. The thought was that, since Jesus cared enough to experience human pain for our salvation, we ought to spend time meditating on his passion so that we might experience it with him. No matter where and how you worship on Good Friday, let the story draw you in. Let your confidence in the fact that Jesus suffers with you inspire you to move with him into the glory of resurrection.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. How has this week's reading added color to what you think about Jesus?
3. Jesus tore the veil that symbolically separated us from God. What are some of the boundaries or fences we put in its place that create distance between us and God today?
4. Good Friday was a terribly dark day, full of suffering. How does calling this day "good" challenge your ideas about the possibilities of suffering toward redemption? What does it look like to see "goodness" in the midst of our own sufferings and trials?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

Throughout Lent, we will be pulling these practices from our [Lenten Practice Guide](#). These practices invite you to either give something up or take something on, with the hope of simplifying your life, standing in solidarity with those who are suffering, and becoming people who love God and others well. Our prayer is that God would meet you in the midst of these new rhythms so that you would experience in real, tangible ways the transforming love of Jesus Christ and the hope of the Resurrection.

Week Six | Fast From Sweets

For thousands of years, the early followers of Jesus practiced **fasting**—abstaining from food for a specified time—as a means of cultivating the fruit of self-control in their lives. Fasting was a way to surrender themselves to God in both mind and body while focusing their hearts on a deep hunger for God. As we enter Holy Week, abstain from sweets—candy, cake, chocolate, etc. In the inevitable moments where you crave the sugar rush, remember that Lent is not meant to be sweet. As you sacrifice your desire for sugar, consider how much Jesus sacrificed for us, particularly in the last days of his life. At the end of the week, reflect on your experience: *How have the past few weeks prepared you to better experience the meaning and message of Easter?*