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CALENDAR KITCHEN

Holy Week, beginning on Sunday, is one of my favorite parts of the church calendar (along with Christmas), and I doubt that I'm alone. During Holy Week, we recall the events spanning from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey up to his death and resurrection—the events that are the center of Scripture, history, and our lives as Christians. Take time this week to read through and reflect on these events in the Gospels.

Holy Week includes five days of special significance:

1. **Palm Sunday** commemorates Jesus' humble, yet triumphant, entry into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey in fulfillment of Zech. 9:9. Here, he was greeted by crowds of people shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"
2. **Maundy Thursday*** commemorates the Last Supper where Jesus shared the Passover meal with his disciples and instituted the Lord's Supper before being arrested.
3. **Good Friday** commemorates Jesus' crucifixion, where he died in place of all who trust in him, taking the death we deserved because of our sin. (See the Prayer Parlor for a day of prayer and fasting in which you can participate)
4. **Holy Saturday** commemorates the day that Jesus' body rested in the grave, awaiting his resurrection. When we read about the crucifixion, it is easy to read on a few more verses and "skip ahead" to the resurrection. Jesus' disciples did not get to do that—Jesus was in the grave. Take time to reflect and remember that Friday night, all of Saturday, and Sunday morning, Jesus had not yet risen. This is the last day of Lent before we celebrate the resurrection.
5. **Easter Sunday** is a day of celebration commemorating Jesus' resurrection. When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb it was empty! Our Savior is risen! Sin and Death have been defeated!

* Maundy Thursday and doing your own Passover Seder

Jewish people still celebrate the Passover meal with what they call a Seder. A Seder is a teaching tool used to retell the story of the Exodus to the next generation. A traditional Seder, in light of Christ, can give us an appreciation for how the Old and New Testaments tell one story, and how the deliverance from Egypt was a precursor to the ultimate deliverance from sin and death through Christ.

Since families are at home, I thought you could have your own Seder meal with your family on Thursday. [You can find all the resources you need here.](#)

I thought it might be a fun thing to do with your family. Look it over; it is a bit of work, but guess what! Many of us have the extra time . . . Try it out!



Family Foyer - Daniel Breed

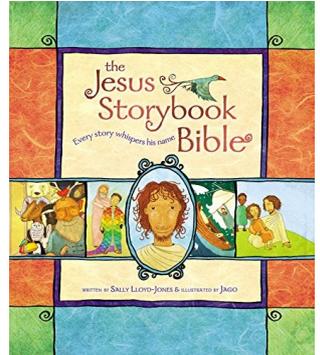
Well, here we are. Families are stuck together for the foreseeable future. You know that “family devotion” discipline that we often put on the back burner because of our busyness? It’s kind of hard to find an excuse for why we don’t do it now. Yet we still might be avoiding this opportunity for us to open the Bible, pray, and talk about God with our family. Why is that? Here are three hinderances to doing these “family devotions,” and what we can do to move forward with this discipline in our lives.

Three Major Hinderances to Family Devotions

1. Starting with Unrealistic Expectations

“Dad, tell me more about the hypostatic union and why Jesus had to be both fully God and Man?” “Claire, what a great question let me take 30 minutes to explain it to you.” I have news for all of you: even in a pastor’s house, my kids do not ask me these questions. Having an hour-long devotional around the table just doesn’t happen. Also, expecting them to love every minute of a devotion and be fully attentive is not a very realistic expectation. We started small and through the years we’ve seen our kids start to be more attentive and to ask more questions.

A devotion might be as simple as reviewing a question from the [New City Catechism](#) after dinner, reading a story from [The Jesus Storybook Bible](#) before bed, or having the girls read a Psalm at breakfast. Sometimes it’s 5 minutes with fussiness, sometimes it’s 20 minutes with great questions. Setting realistic expectations and realizing our family isn’t a Norman Rockwell painting has helped.

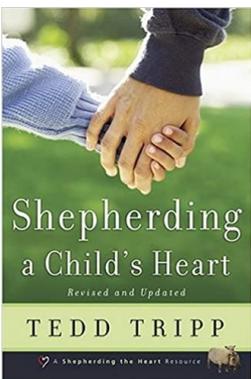


2. Thinking It’s All About Them

“I just have to get my girls some morals and maybe Erin will shape up too.” Many times, I think family devotionals are a way I can show my manliness and leadership in the household. However, I’ve learned this kind of controlling attitude can seriously backfire. I’ve found the best foundation for family devotionals is modeling the Gospel in my own life. When my family sees that Bible study and prayer is forming me and *I need it too*, they want to join. Ellie and Morgan seeing Erin doing a devotional early in the morning or Caroline and Claire hearing Dad say, “I am sorry, I too need Jesus to forgive me” shows our girls that this Christianity thing is transformational in their parents’ lives. This modeling makes them hunger for God too.

3. Forgetting the Gospel

I can hear the objections coming out of your mouth already. “I’ve tried these things.” “You don’t understand my kids.” “You don’t understand our schedule.” “You don’t have boys!” One of the major hinderances to family devotionals is thinking there is a plug and chug formula to getting our kids to fall in love with Jesus. The truth is that there is one who knows your kids better than you ever could: God. He made them, knows their desires, how they tick, etc. God has put us, as parents, in a critical role to lead our children, and many times that can be incredibly frustrating when they don’t want to listen for 5 minutes around the dinner table. However, the Gospel is not about our control over them, but directing them to be under the control of a truly benevolent Father (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). What this may mean for us: mixing it up, being patient, being on our knees in prayer for our kids, and realizing God is working as we are being sanctified by our children. Don’t give up! God is working even if you can’t see it!



[Here are some resources for family devotions.](#) If you want a copy of *The Jesus Storybook Bible* or *New City Catechism*, we have some and can deliver. Contact [Danielle Elmhurst](#), our Children’s Coordinator, if you need one. [Shepherding a Child’s Heart](#) by Tedd Tripp is a book that has been very formative for Erin and me in parenting.

Counseling Courtyard

-From the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

As our own Dr. Doreen Marshall writes, "It's important to note that we are not helpless in light of current news events. We can always choose our response." If you are struggling, here are some ways to take care of your mental health in the face of uncertainty:

1. **Separate what is in your control from what is not.** There are things you can do, and it's helpful to focus on those. Wash your hands. Remind others to wash theirs. Take your vitamins. Limit your consumption of news (Do you really need to know what is happening on a cruise ship you aren't on?).
2. **Do what helps you feel a sense of safety.** This will be different for everyone, and it's important not to compare yourself to others. It's ok if you've decided what makes you feel safe is to limit attendance of large social events*, but make sure you separate when you are isolating based on potential for sickness versus isolating because it's part of depression.
3. **Get outside in nature**—even if you are avoiding crowds. Exercise also helps both your physical and mental health.
4. **Challenge yourself to stay in the present.** Perhaps your worry is compound-ing—you are not only thinking about what is currently happening, but also projecting into the future. When you find yourself worrying about something that hasn't happened, gently bring yourself back to the present moment. Notice the sights, sounds, tastes and other sensory experiences in your immediate moment and name them. Engaging in mindfulness activities is one way to help stay grounded when things feel beyond your control.
5. **Stay connected and reach out if you need more support.** Talk to trusted friends about what you are feeling. If you are feeling particularly anxious or if you are struggling with your mental health, it's ok to reach out to a mental health professional for support. You don't have to be alone with your worry and it can be comforting to share what you are experiencing with those trained to help.

*(Note that these do not take into account our current Safer at Home order, which should be followed)

Emmaus Road Church has also started a **TALKLINE** for social and prayer support. **TALKLINE** offers a kind voice to prevent isolation; provide an opportunity to connect with trained, compassionate, volunteer listeners; and provide prayer, information, and referral. Visit our website for more information.

Doctor's Den - Dr. Martha Grace Courtright

How can I protect myself? *

1. **Wash your hands.** Might not be as simple as it first seems. Think of each surface as covered with glitter. If you touch that surface your hands have glitter on them. You must wash your hands or use alcohol gel to remove the glitter. The key is to keep glitter from your face. Only if you have clean hands can you touch your face.
2. **Don't touch your face** (unless your hands are clean)
3. **If you smoke, stop.** People who smoke are more likely to get a severe COVID-19 infection compared to non-smokers. Think of this time as the perfect, compelling reason to put this expensive, dangerous habit behind you. Forever.
4. **Wear your glasses, not your contacts.** Ophthalmologists say that people touch their eyes more frequently throughout the day when they wear contacts compared to glasses. And of course, when we touch our eyes to put the contacts in or take them out, we are potentially introducing infection (even with good hand washing).
5. **Get good quality sleep.** In a study of infections with the viruses that cause the common cold, people who get less than 5 hours of sleep had triple the rate compared to those who got 7 hours or more.
6. **Manage your stress.** People who are psychologically stressed have higher levels of inflammatory markers in their bloodstream and tend to catch respiratory infections more than un-stressed people. Of course, we all have more stress now than we did a month ago. You might have to sacrifice a day or two of keeping up-to-date on all the news to separate yourself. Focus on something that gets your mind away from all this—a house project, your kids, writing, reading, catching up with a friend. Also, see below.

*The above was adapted from something my mom (also a Family Doctor) wrote. If you want to read a great article she wrote for the national Christian Medical Dental Association about dealing with worry during this time click [here](#).

Liturgical Library - Benjamin Novak

First, I have compiled a [Spotify playlist](#) of all of the songs in our church canon. Since we're all staying home and not able to physically attend services or other groups right now, I thought you all might enjoy and be encouraged by listening to the songs we sing together. It also might keep some songs fresh in your mind, especially those we sing less often.

Second, I have a book of liturgies called "Every Moment Holy" by Douglas McKelvey which speaks to different events and seasons in life, and this liturgy particularly stood out to me.

A Liturgy for Missing Someone

(bold portions for optional leader; otherwise, can be done solo/unison)

We willingly carry this ache.

We carry it, O Father, to you.

**You created our hearts for unbroken fellowship.
Yet the constraints of time and place, and the
stuttering rhythms of life in a fallen world
dictate that all fellowships in these days
will at times be broken or incomplete.**

And so we find ourselves in this season,
bearing the sorrow of our separation from _____.
(speak the name of the absent person/persons here.)

**We acknowledge, O Lord, that it is
a right and a good thing to miss deeply
those whom we love but with whom
we cannot be physically present.**

Grant us, therefore, courage to love well
even in this time of absence.

**Grant us courage to shrink neither from
the aches nor from the joys that love brings,
for each, willingly received, will accomplish
the good works You have appointed them to do.**

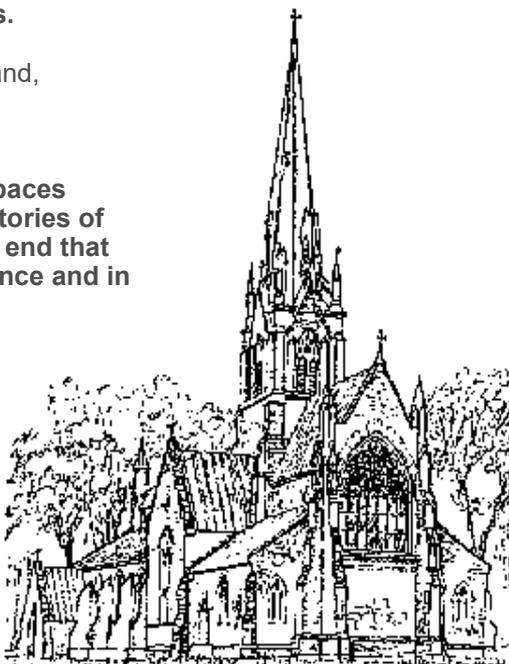
Therefore we praise You even for our sadness,
knowing that the sorrows we steward in this
life will in time be redeemed.

**We praise You also knowing that these glad
aches are a true measure of the bonds
You have wrought between our hearts.**

Now use our sorrows as tools in Your hand,
O Lord, shaping our hearts into a truer
imitation of the affections of Christ.

**Use even this sadness to carve out spaces
in our souls where still greater repositories of
holy affection might be held, unto the end that
we might better love, in times of absence and in
times of presence alike.**

We now entrust all to Your keeping.
May our reunion be joyous,
whether in this life
or in the life to come.
How we look forward,
O Lord, to the day
when all our fellowships
will be restored,
eternal and unbroken.
Amen.



Prayer Parlor

What better thing could we do during this time of fear, anger, uncertainty, and isolation than to lean into it with prayer, crying out to our loving and merciful Father who is in complete control? Here are three concrete ways that you can lean in and pray—and you won't be doing it alone:

1. The Presbyterian Church in America has entered into a Month of Prayer for the Church, Nation, and World for April. [Click here to download the prayer guide.](#)
2. There has been a call for all in the Presbyterian Church in America, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, and the Anglican Church in North America to set aside Good Friday, April 10, as a day of prayer and fasting to cry out for God's help, in addition to a Holy Day of worship. [Click here to download a prayer and fasting by Richard Pratt.](#)
3. Every Wednesday, beginning at noon, will continue having an ERC prayer meeting via Zoom.

A Prayer by Sandy Tobias

Lord,
Silence my heart
In the Beauty
Of Your Name.
Give me the
Heart of a
Child and the
Understanding
Of the wise
That I may
In some way
Come to trust,
Trust You more.
Our days feel
Uncertain-
Keep my feet
Planted in You.
Life me up
Beyond my fear
Until in Your
Presence I am
Perfectly at rest,
Perfectly in awe,
Perfectly humbled
By Your unfailing
Faithful Love.



“The Return of the Prodigal Son”
by Jean-Louis Fontain

Contact Cupboard

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