

BEST NEWS EVER

THE PATH TO EASTER
FOR STUDENTS

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WEEK 1

JESUS, THE MAN WHO SUFFERED LIKE US

Some of the best news in the whole Bible is that when God became a human, he experienced life like a human. That means Jesus knows what it is like to be hungry, lonely, happy, and sad just like us! Jesus was a teenager once, just like you! He had friends, enemies, and faced difficult situations and decisions. We may not always have the answer to why hard things happen, but we can always know, and be comforted by, the fact that our God has made a point to be with us when the hard things happen.

MARCH 16 - MATTHEW 26:36-46

How do you picture Jesus when you think of him? Is he creating the world like we're told in John? Is he sharing a meal with the unpopular? Maybe he is teaching, healing, on the cross, or even resurrecting. I would guess that "so sad he might die" is not high on your list. That may be hard to picture, but it is a precious truth. Jesus felt sad. REALLY sad! Jesus experienced more sadness and pain than anything we have, and that is comforting. When you bring your hurt and sadness to Jesus... He knows exactly how you feel. He's been there himself, AND he will be there with you.

REFLECT

1. What does this passage teach us about Jesus' humanity?
2. How does Jesus respond to his pain? What can we learn from his response?
3. Why is it a big deal that the God we worship experienced real human emotions and suffering?

RESPOND

Where do you feel sadness, loneliness, betrayal, or pain? Take a moment to picture Jesus as he is described above... suffering. Then, bring those hurts to Jesus and be comforted by the fact that He understands exactly how you feel.

MARCH 17 - ISAIAH 53

This chapter in Isaiah says some incredible things about Jesus— and here's the thing— It was written around 700 years before Jesus' birth! "Why is that a big deal?" you might ask. Take another minute to read what we're told (if you have some trouble understanding some of the words, try a translation like the NLT or a paraphrase like the Message). "Despised", "rejected", "oppressed"... These are all words used to describe what Jesus' life would be like as a man. It wasn't some mistake, or some plans gone wrong, that caused Jesus to suffer. It was God's plan all along, and that is, in fact, good news! Jesus, on purpose, experienced every pain and suffering that normal human life can bring. It was part of God's plan all along!

REFLECT

1. Take a minute to write out all the words that are used to describe Jesus "the suffering servant".
2. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus intentionally experienced all the hard stuff life brings just like we do?
3. Why do you think it was necessary for Jesus to suffer for Him to save us?

RESPOND

Think back on your answers from question one. Which of those do you feel like you have the most in common with? Take at least 5 quiet minutes to just sit and think about how your God has chosen to experience that pain with you.

MARCH 18 - PSALM 75

This is a song about justice — evil getting what it deserves. When the world seems to be turned on its head by evil and injustice, God promises “don’t worry... I’m the one that holds it all down.” God’s judgment is then spoken of like a cup of wine, that all the evil people will one day have to drink. Let’s pause and take a moment to remember... “Where have we heard of this cup before?” (Hint... it’s in the text from day 1!) The very cup of judgment that is made for all who deserve God’s judgment (that’s everyone!), Jesus is given to drink instead. He took every last drop of it...

REFLECT

1. Read verse 3 again. What makes your world feel topsy turvy? How does it make you feel to know that God is still in control?
2. Go back and read verse 8 again. Now reread the text from Day 1 (Matthew 26:36-46). How does Psalm 75:8 give you a deeper understanding of Jesus’ prayers in the Garden?

RESPOND

Take a minute to write down in your journal (or a piece of paper) all the things in your life that should keep you from God.

Now write a prayer of thanks to Jesus for drinking all of those things down in your place, so that you could forever be with the Father.

MARCH 19 - HEBREWS 2:14-18

Jesus is our High Priest. A priest is someone who goes into the presence of God representing other people. Essentially, Jesus (God the Son) stands before God the Father and represents us to Him. Why does that matter? It matters because we suffer, we are tempted, and, ultimately, we die; and Jesus is God who suffered like us, was tempted like us, and died... like us. It’s good news that Jesus represents us because Jesus understands what it is like to be us. More than that... Jesus overcame suffering, he overcame temptation, and he overcame death. Now, he stands before the Father on our behalf making a way for us to overcome as well.

REFLECT

1. Why is it important to be represented by someone who understands you and your situation?
2. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus (who made you) chose to become like you?
3. How does Jesus being made like us make him able to help us when tempted?

RESPOND

Write down a prayer to Jesus thanking him for choosing to become like you, choosing to experience what you experience, and for choosing to die in your place.

MARCH 20 - HEBREWS 4:14-16

Again, we are given the hope of Jesus as our “great High Priest”. This time, we’re told that because he is “great”, and he has “passed through the heavens” (has direct access to God) that we should “hold fast our confession”. That is just a fancy way of saying “Jesus can identify with us, He represents us in God’s presence, and he is great at His job... and that should encourage us!” Don’t be afraid to draw near to the Father, for Jesus is waiting there ready to give grace and help.

REFLECT

1. Why should Jesus as our great high priest encourage us as we follow him?
2. What does the word “sympathize” mean? Why is it important that Jesus can sympathize with us?
3. Why should all this give us confidence to run to God for help?

RESPOND

Where do you need God’s help? Where do you need his mercy and grace? Rely on Jesus and don’t be afraid to ask boldly for help, grace, and mercy!

WEEK 2

JESUS, THE MEDIATOR WHO FULFILLED THE LAW FOR US

The Gospel of Jesus is the Best news ever because, in him, we now have a way back to God! We were made to know God, and to be close to him forever. But, since we all choose to go our own way we remain separate. That separation was made incredibly clear in the Law, which had all kinds of rules and ceremonies that needed to be followed just to allow certain priests to be in God's presence occasionally. Jesus fulfills that Law, and now there is no separation between us and the presence of God!

MARCH 23 - MATTHEW 26: 57-67

As the chief priests were trying to cook up reasons to have Jesus executed, an accusation was made: “He said he would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days!” They took it as a threat, but it really was a beautiful promise. The temple, God’s dwelling place, would no longer be needed for God would dwell inside everyone who believed. There would be no more need for walls between God and man, no more separation or distance. Jesus would fulfill everything the temple and the Law represented and we would be finally restored to our creator!

REFLECT

1. Why do you think the priests were so threatened by the claim that Jesus would tear down the temple and rebuild it?
2. What does Jesus mean by “rebuilding the temple” in three days? Where is the new temple?
3. Look at verses 63 and 64. What do you think Jesus’ answer in v. 64 means in your own words?

RESPOND

The temple was the place where God’s people went to meet with God. Read Psalm 42:1-2. Meditate on these words, and ask God to meet with you right where you are!

MARCH 24 - JEREMIAH 31:31-34

We often think of the events of the Bible as so far removed from us. I mean, those promises were to people who lived thousands of years ago, right? Wrong! Jeremiah’s promise of a “New Covenant”, different from the Law of Moses, is the very covenant we live under right now! We get to know God firsthand! Our sin is wiped clean and God doesn’t remember it! This is not just a promise for a people living thousands of years ago, it is a promise that is being fulfilled now!

REFLECT

1. Look up the definition of the word covenant. What does it mean for God to make a covenant with humanity?
2. Take a minute to write down all the things that are promised in this New Covenant. Where do you see them fulfilled in the life of the Christian today?
3. We’ve talked about the things God promised to do for us already. What are the things that God asks us to do to keep our part of the covenant? (*hint: he doesn’t ask anything of us!*) Why do you think that is?

RESPOND

Take a moment to think about God’s heart for you. He has made great promises, at great cost to himself, simply so you can experience just how good he is.

MARCH 25 - ROMANS 8:1-4

Before you read anything else, stop, take a minute, and go read verse 1 again. “No condemnation” for anyone who is “in Christ Jesus”. That is truly incredible news! The Law was not enough— not because God made a bad Law, but because we were bad at keeping it. The Law showed us just how weak we are, just how little we can do for God, just how much condemnation we really deserve. BUT... “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Best. News. Ever.

REFLECT

1. Why was the Law weakened by the flesh?
2. Who do these verses say is responsible for us being declared free from the Law?
3. Why is the promise of verse 1 so great?

RESPOND

Do you ever feel like God is condemning you? Write out all the ways that you feel you don't measure up and spend some time asking God to remind you that Jesus was perfect in all the ways we are weak.

MARCH 26 - GALATIANS 3:10-14

Paul shows us two ways of life here in these four verses. One life, the life of the Law, is cursed. And what is this curse? The curse of striving to win God's love while knowing you will never be able to do enough to get there. What a terrible way to live! The other way of life is the life of faith. Faith in what? Faith in the work of Jesus! He lived the perfect life we can't, he absorbed the curse so we don't have to bear it, he was condemned so we could be justified. Paul reminds us that the person who believes God, is made right by Him, and that is the best way to live

REFLECT

1. What is the curse of living under the Law?
2. What do you think it means to “live by faith”?
3. If Jesus took the curse for us, does it make sense to keep living under that curse? Why?

RESPOND

Set a timer for three minutes. While taking a deep breath in, say to yourself, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.” Breathe out and say, “by becoming a curse for us.” Repeat this several times and enjoy the space to meditate on this fantastic news. You are free from curse and a recipient of God's blessing.

MARCH 27 - HEBREWS 10:1-4, 11-20

The Law was never meant to be the answer for sin. If the sacrifice of animals could truly save, then surely we would sacrifice every animal needed rather than the Son of God! So why, then, did they need to sacrifice? God wanted to make it abundantly clear that our sin has consequences, AND abundantly clear that he was always planning to sacrifice his Son. Think about that! All throughout human history God has been telling us a story of salvation, pointing us to Jesus all along the way. Jesus, the only sacrifice that can pay for our sin.

REFLECT

1. Why do you think the people of the Old Testament needed to be reminded of the cost of sin through sacrifice?
2. Why do you think the author contrasts the human priests, who waited continually to make sacrifices as needed, to Jesus the priest who has finished the work and is seated with God?
3. Where have you heard verses 16 and 17 before? Why is this significant?

RESPOND



Take a few minutes to worship in response to this magnificent truth by listening to “Thank You Jesus for the Blood” by Charity Gayle.

WEEK 3

JESUS, THE MESSIAH WHO SAVED US

The Gospel is the best news ever because Jesus' work on the cross saves us even today! The way of Jesus is something that seems crazy to the world around us, but to us it is hope and peace. Jesus of Nazareth, the suffering servant, Messiah, King of Kings, God in flesh has saved us through his perfect life, sacrificial death, and triumphant resurrection.

MARCH 30 - LUKE 23:32-33, 39-43

We are told that there were two criminals crucified alongside Jesus. Two criminals, and an innocent man all dying together. One of them decides to mock Jesus— “Aren’t you supposed to be some kind of Messiah? It’s about time to show it and save us!” The other has a moment of clarity and makes a simple request— “Remember me in your kingdom.” To which Jesus responds “I’ll do more than remember... I’ll take you there!”

REFLECT

1. Take a moment to list out the similarities and differences between the two criminals.
2. What do you find interesting about this encounter?
3. What does this passage teach us about salvation?

RESPOND

We are all, at times, like the first criminal— blind to our own spiritual shortcomings. What are some areas of your life where you need Jesus to show you your own weakness, and then live out true forgiveness?

MARCH 31 - MATTHEW 9:9-13

When you think of the people Jesus surrounds himself with, who do you think of? Holy people? People who are further along in their faith than you? Clearly he would want to be around people who don’t have the same struggles that you have right? That couldn’t be further from the truth! Jesus’ heart is always drawn to spiritually poor, sinners, traitors, the looked down on. He seeks them out, draws them in, and shows them he desires nothing more than for them to follow him. Jesus came to save everyday people, like me and you.

REFLECT

1. Does it seem strange to you that the people God the Son chose to spend time with were considered the lowest in society? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think the religious elites were upset by Jesus seeking out tax collectors and sinners?
3. What does this passage teach us about Jesus’ heart for the spiritually “sick”?

RESPOND

Your neediness doesn’t scare God away from you, it draws him closer! Where are you weak? What are your spiritual needs? What hurts or is broken in your life? Share it with Jesus and know that he will not turn away, but draw nearer and nearer to you— especially in your brokenness.

APRIL 1 - 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-24

The Gospel of Jesus makes no sense to the world! The world loves power, success, fame, and most importantly... The world loves itself. Yet, the main claim of the Christian faith is that an all-powerful God gave up all those things to become a human (not even a well-loved or well-treated human), to die for the broken and sinful, and to call us to live lives that think of God and others before ourselves. On top of that, we claim that all we need for God's complete favor is faith in Jesus. It seems both too difficult and too easy all at the same time. Yet... it is both true and incredibly powerful!

REFLECT

1. There are two groups of people described in these verses. Who are they and how are they described?
2. What are some things the world relies on for salvation?
3. Why do you think the good news of Jesus is described as "folly" to the world?

RESPOND

Write out all the ways that the Gospel seems "too good to be true." As you think about those ways, take a moment to thank God for being so kind to us at so great a cost to himself.

APRIL 2 - TITUS 3:3-7

This passage describes both the past and present realities for those who are in Christ. Notice the contrast... foolish, disobedient, slaves... compared with heirs having the hope of eternal life. What is the difference? Did we get better? Did we finally achieve some level of holiness that we didn't have before through hard work and dedication? No! The only difference between the "us" of the past and the "us" described in the text is one thing: The grace of God given to us because of how deeply he loves us. We are loved by God, far greater than we will ever know, and that makes all the difference!

REFLECT

1. Write down all the ways we are described before Christ, and how we are described after meeting him.
2. Why is it important that the love of God is described as the thing that changed us, rather than our own goodness?
3. What does it mean to be an heir of eternal life? (You may have to look up a few of those words!)

RESPOND

Write a prayer of thanksgiving for God's saving work in your life!

APRIL 3 - 1 PETER 2:22-25

Go back and read that again! Jesus, the perfect, the honest, and the forgiving... hated, suffered, and ultimately died. He didn't do this for no reason! He did it for you, and for me, and for everyone else who would believe. He was wounded so we could be healed and now he watches over us, a Good Shepherd keeping his sheep safe, fed, watered, and rested. Jesus, at great cost to himself, has saved us, and now holds us in his loving and healing arms. That is the Best. News. Ever.

REFLECT

1. How did Jesus respond when he was treated with unjust punishment?
2. Why do you think we are healed by Jesus' wounds?
3. Does it comfort you to know that Jesus watches over you like a shepherd cares for sheep? Why or why not?

RESPOND

Go read Psalm 23. As you read, picture yourself as a sheep with Jesus as the shepherd. May you always find his peace in the valley, and may you experience his goodness and mercy as they chase you down every day of your life. Amen.

