



DEVOTIONS
FOR
Easter



Written and Compiled by Stacy J. Edwards





ZONDERVAN

Devotions for Easter

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546

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Introduction

Growing up, holidays were always a big deal in my house, and they included everything a holiday should: decorations, good food, and lots of family. My favorite part of it all was that anytime my parents and their siblings got together, someone was going to tell a story. Sure, it would probably be the same story that someone else told the year before. There might be a squabble over the details, but none of that mattered. I would still laugh at the same parts and feign surprise at the way it turned out. Those stories are a huge part of who I am today.

I always tell people that I am many things: a Christ-chaser, a pastor's wife, a trucker's daughter, an author, and a homeschooling mother to five daughters. I have also *always* been a sucker for a good story. Whether they were my grandfather's war stories, my dad's over-the-road trucker stories, or my mother's mesmerizing account of an angel carrying her baby sister to heaven, I



learned early on that stories make a difference. Stories enable us to feel close to family members we've never met, learn from mistakes we didn't have to make, and witness God's faithfulness throughout the years—and *the best ones* are the ones that are told over and over again.

The children of Israel were instructed on several occasions to share their stories with their own children. The psalmist made it clear that God's people were to share His faithfulness so that future generations would hear the stories and pass them on to their children (Psalm 78:5–6). It's why, as the people crossed over the Jordan, they were told to pick up a stone. Then, when future children asked what those stones meant, the people were to tell their story (Joshua 4:6–7). It was always God's intention that we be a storytelling people.

With that in mind, I invite you to join me as I share some of my favorite Easter stories from history, from Scripture, and from my personal collection of family stories. My prayer is that as we make our way closer to Easter, these stories will serve to point us all to the greatest story ever told. Let's journey to the cross together.

—STACY J. EDWARDS

DAY 1

No Turning Back

1



The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!”

—MATTHEW 21:9

Have you ever had a “no turning back” kind of moment? There’s no mistaking it when it happens. A feeling deep inside tells you that from this point forward, things will never be the same. It could have been the birth of a child or the loss of a loved one. Maybe it was a moment when you were presented with two career options, or when you made a decision about a relationship. Can you recall the feelings that accompanied that kind of moment?

For me, that moment came on Easter Sunday, 1984. There, in the pew of Alliance Baptist Temple, God lit a fire in my heart that still burns bright today. A realization of my desperate need, a plea for forgiveness, and a determination to walk in a new life all set me on a path of no return.

And Palm Sunday represented such a moment in Jesus’ life. This is the day we celebrate Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem.



As He entered the city, the crowds shouted, “Hosanna!” and declared Him King. *This*, Bible scholars tell us, *this moment* was Jesus’ “no turning back” moment. He “crossed the point of no return,” for those in power simply could not allow Him to continue challenging their authority as He had.¹


Can you imagine the intensity of that moment? Jesus’ entire earthly ministry had been leading Him to this precise point. Every miracle performed and every message preached had been in preparation for this day. The Pharisees and government officials may have previously backed down or overlooked other perceived offenses, but not this one. They could not. In the midst of the celebratory atmosphere, tension hung in the air; there would be consequences.

Jesus sealed His fate when He rode into Jerusalem that day. He didn’t cloak His identity in parables or hidden messages; He declared Himself to be *the* Messiah. An action like that could not be undone. The time had come for Him to reveal Himself, ensuring that His death would come soon. Jesus knew this, yet He did not cower, back down, or change His mind. His love for us carried Him straight to the cross.

As you contemplate Easter and what it means for you,



allow yourself to follow in His steps. Hear the shouting of the crowds. Look into the faces of those who loved Him. Consider the incredible weight that must have rested on His shoulders. What kind of love must have kept Him going—to the point of “no turning back”—knowing He would soon be despised and crucified? Take in every word of His final teachings. May your love and gratitude for Him carry you straight to the cross. No turning back.



Thank You, Lord, for marching
bravely to the cross. You never looked
back. Give me that same *determination*,
and help me follow You with every step.



A pink lily flower with yellow stamens is positioned in the top-left corner of the page. The background is a teal-colored wooden plank texture.

DAY 2

At the Easter Parade



“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.”

—MATTHEW 6:1

If you use social media this Easter Sunday, you’ll see (and perhaps post) snaps of immaculate, pastel-colored outfits, well-groomed children, and spring foliage. Then there’s the fine china at Easter lunch, the glistening ham, the table settings, and flowers. It’s a veritable online Easter parade!

The Easter parade is nothing new, of course. In fact, things were not all that different before the Internet, though the venue has certainly changed. Easter parades have been a fixture in New York City since the mid-1800s. Society’s elite would first attend the morning church service and then would parade around the town to be seen by all in their Easter finery. The Easter parade was all about being seen and admired.

The biggest difference these days, though, is in the personal details we can add to our online parade. Aside from splendid



pictures, we're tempted to announce our charitable causes, what we're giving up for Lent, and anything we're particularly proud of. But what are our motives? Are we in danger of letting this holy holiday become all about being seen and admired?

The Pharisees were known for making this mistake. They loved the limelight, and they constantly put themselves and their righteousness on display—especially on holy days. But Jesus gave very clear instructions on how we are to conduct our spiritual activities. Whether it's worship, celebration, prayer, fasting, or giving to the poor, we should never do anything in an attention-seeking manner. In fact, if you reach out to give an offering, Jesus said, you shouldn't even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing (Matthew 6:3)! Now that's quite different from how the world would have us behave, isn't it?

This Easter season, be intentional about not making a production. Choose to be sincere instead of flashy. If no one knows how often we pray or how much we gave to the local food bank, it's okay. We don't need to send out a mass message letting folks know that we'll be giving up coffee for forty days. We can honor the Lord by doing all these things in secret, knowing that the Father who sees what's done in secret will reward us.

Help me let go of the need to be
seen and *admired*, Lord. Remind
me that You see and *reward*
the things done in secret.



DAY 3

That Thing





*After fasting forty days and
forty nights, he was hungry.*

—MATTHEW 4:2

What comforts you? What is that *thing* that you automatically turn to for relaxation after a particularly hard day? Some of us find solace in a hot cup of coffee. Others, perhaps, lose themselves in television or a good book. It could even be a person to whom you look for validation. Maybe, for you, it's food. After all, a piece of cheesecake never hurt anyone's feelings. The reality is that we all have something that we use to try to soothe our wounds and bolster our strength.

Lent is a time when many Christians choose to deny themselves that *thing* and, instead, focus on prayer or another spiritual discipline. For instance, rather than reaching for your morning cup of tea, reach for your Bible. Instead of spending time watching your favorite television show, you might listen to worship music or have a time of prayer. It's common for people to fast from social media or sugary desserts. The point? To let go of an earthly comfort in order to cling all the more to the Lord.



Prior to being tempted by Satan, Jesus spent forty days and forty nights fasting. In His day *fasting* would have meant a denial of food. So it's understandable that Jesus felt very hungry at the end of the fast. Satan might have thought this would make Jesus weak, but not so. By denying Himself physical nourishment and dedicating Himself instead to spiritual nourishment, Jesus was better equipped to handle the Devil's temptations. So when the time came to face the Enemy, Jesus was filled with Scripture, which He used to shield Himself against Satan's attacks.

So . . . could it be that hunger is good for us? The psalmist declared that the Lord fills the hungry soul with good things (Psalm 107:9). When we enter God's presence hungry, we are putting ourselves in a position to be filled. Why then do we tend to fear spiritual hunger? At the first hint of that empty ache, we reach for something to fill it. And the world offers up a smorgasbord of choices which, while not all bad, are usually not best. But if we train ourselves to take that emptiness and fill it with God, our needs will be satisfied by His loving generosity.

That brings us back to *that thing*. What is it that God may be asking you to let go of for a time in order to be filled with the good things only He can provide? Enter His presence hungry, and allow Him to fill you with good things.



DAY 4

Sunday Best



Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

—MATTHEW 16:22

What do you consider your “Sunday best”? Do those words call up images of flouncy childhood outfits with layers, lace, pastels, or patent leather shoes? These clothes made for lovely photos but caused an awful lot of pinching, chafing, and restless wiggles in the pews. These days, we seem to have gravitated toward a more comfortable way of dressing for church. This is not necessarily a bad thing (especially for those poor kids!). But it does remind us of our human impulse to seek more and more comfort in every area of life: physically, emotionally, financially, and spiritually. We might even attempt to create a comfortable Christianity, overlooking those ideas that make us flinch. The only problem is that there is nothing comfortable about the cross.

The idea of a suffering Savior made the apostle Peter positively chafe. Peter acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ



(Matthew 16:16) but balked at the idea of His death. He wanted Him to take the words back. He rebuked Him. This wasn't what he expected. Christ's teaching, healing, miracles—Peter was comfortable with those scenarios. But, now, He was talking about death. There was nothing comfortable about following Him to a grave.

If we are honest, we are probably not that different from Peter. Those of us who are Christ-followers are quick to call Him Lord, but what about when God's plan goes outside our comfort zone? Are we willing to go to that place, minister to those people, adopt that child, give up that thing we know we should?

We do not have to be slaves to our desire for comfort. Let's choose to put ourselves in situations that require us to lean fully on God's provision. Today, let's put Christ ahead of our comfort, as He put us ahead of His.

