



EEN MENSCH VANDER
VROUWEN GEBOREN
CORTELY TAT LEFENDES
VERVUT MET VLEG
ALLENDICHEDEN



DAY 1: THE GRAVE

GOOD FRIDAY | AFTERNOON & DUSK



OVERVIEW

Today we will be exploring Jesus' crucifixion, death, and burial. The emphasis is on laying our plans, disappointments and unfulfilled hopes in the grave with Jesus. During these practices we will explore the spiritual disciplines of empathy, silence, self-examination and simplicity.

Disclaimer: The first practice is designed to challenge our comfort zones and may evoke uncomfortable emotions as we dive into the reality of death and the grave. Before beginning please be mindful of your current emotional capacity and that of those who will be joining you (including children). Alternatively you can begin your journey with Part 2 below.

PRACTICE PART 1: GRAVES (DAYTIME)

REFLECTION | EMPATHY

CONTEXT

Good Friday certainly didn't feel "good" to Jesus or his friends. A long, sleepless night followed by a "friendly backstabbing", a public arrest, and a failed court case resulting in immediate execution would be considered a "bad day" by most standards (John 18-19). Today we reflect on the crucifixion and burial of Jesus and we'll be exploring the uncomfortable yet necessary role of death in the Easter story.

Death isn't something we like to give much airtime to in our modern culture, yet it is the inevitable culmination of each and every human life. Some deaths feel dignified or even beautiful—the closing paragraph of a long and fulfilling life story. Others feel tragic, unfair or even cruel, and challenge our sense of wellbeing and hope for a more perfect world. Whatever the context, we must grapple with death in order to understand and experience the true power of resurrection.

We will start our Easter weekend by reminding ourselves once again of the reality of the grave and allow this hard truth to prime our hearts to fully embrace the joy of rebirth!

HOW TO

Locate a gravesite, cemetery or place of remembrance near you. It may be a site of incredible significance or a public space with no personal meaning whatsoever. As a group (or on your own) visit this location with a posture of observance, empathy, and reverence.

OBSERVE: Walk around. Observe the nature of "endings". Read the inscriptions and notice the length of lives lived and the nature of "fair" and unfair



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deaths. Allow yourself to dwell on notable features and take time to embrace any thoughts or feelings that come to the surface.

DISCUSS/REFLECT: What did you see and how did it make you feel? Why?

Allow your observations to draw out areas of disappointment or grief in your own life; unfulfilled hopes and dreams, unmet expectations, failure, loss or heartbreak. As you move toward the evening practice, invite God to draw your attention to specific instances in your life where hope has been lost, broken, or delayed. Begin to consider what it would mean for you to bury some of these expectations in the grave with Jesus.

PRAY: *Father, our lives are so often shaped by disappointment and grief. We so desperately cling to the outcomes we desire rather than surrendering our demands to you. Teach us to let go of control and trust you completely. Not our will, but yours be done.*

NOTE FOR FAMILIES

As is age-appropriate, invite your kids to explore the gravesites. Point out or read particular markers/sites to them. Ask questions (or allow them to ask you questions) about what they see and feel. Talk to them about how Jesus was crucified and buried in a grave (tomb) and how His friends (the disciples) really thought it was all over. Explain that this weekend will be about exploring the story of Jesus' death, how sad and disappointed His followers were, and the incredibly amazing thing that happened after that! (Refrain from spoilers. Allow your child/children to experience each day for what it is: the disappointment, the waiting/unknown, and finally the joy.)

PRACTICE PART 2: LIGHTS OUT (EVENING)

SILENCE | STILLNESS | SELF-EXAMINATION

HOW TO

As the sun begins to set, create an atmosphere of simplicity and calm in your living space by lighting candles around your home and turning off all lights, televisions, computers, phones, digital devices, etc. The goal is to set the tone for the evening and prepare your crew for the practice.

When everyone is gathered and ready to start the reading, extinguish all extra candles except for one placed in front of each person (or one shared candle for everyone). Our aim is to come to a point of total darkness by the end of this reflection time so make sure you've pre-read all of the steps.



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READ TOGETHER

When you're ready to start, gather your household together (turn off any remaining devices) and invite someone to read the following:

READER: *Good Friday is the traditional observance of Jesus' death on the cross and His burial in the garden tomb. Tonight we are going to explore our own feelings of disappointment and grief through the eyes of the disciples.*

READ TOGETHER: The Crucifixion & Burial of Christ. Choose from:

Matthew 27:1-54 / Mark 15:1-40 / Luke 23:1-48 / John 19:1-30

REFLECT: *Let's take a moment to reflect on the experience of the disciples as they watched Jesus, their greatest hope, die right in front of them, buried in a tomb and sealed up with a heavy stone.*

DISCUSS: *How do you imagine the disciples were feeling at this point? How would you feel?*

READER: *They say grief is the price we pay for love, but perhaps it's also the price we pay for having hope. Much like the disciples, we all experience grief when our hopes and desires come crashing down. From the smallest disappointment to the greatest loss, unfulfilled expectations keep us in a state of constant recalibration, searching for a new route to the life we imagined we'd have. The unfortunate fact is that the tighter we hold onto these unmet expectations, the longer our grief lasts. As the Hebrew proverb says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Proverbs 13:12).*

But here's the big secret of Easter: *In order for any hope to be fulfilled, for any garden to produce a harvest, the seeds must first be buried in the dirt—hidden, dark and alone. Jesus spoke this truth of Himself when He said, "unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." (John 12:24) Every plan, hope, dream, or desire we have will only be able to blossom to its fullest potential if we're willing to bury it in the ground with Jesus and completely let go of control. It is only from this dark and silent grave of surrender that true beauty can spring forth.*

In stillness invite your household/group to respond to the following:

ASK: *Let's ask God to bring to mind any unfulfilled dreams or unmet expectations we've been carrying...*

LISTEN: *We'll take a few minutes of silence to listen together as He brings these things to mind. Consider writing them down or simply hold them in your mind.*

SILENCE: 2-5 minutes (or as needed)



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PRAY: *God, these things which are actually beyond our control have so often troubled our hearts. We choose to bury them like seeds in the dirt. We place them in the grave with Christ. We choose to let go of control and leave the outcomes in your hands, Father. We trust you and we believe that you will raise these hopes to life again when, if, and how you see fit.*

ACT: *Now, as each of us becomes ready to completely let go of these things, we'll **blow out our candle and whisper or reflect Christ's final words on the cross: "It is finished".***

STILLNESS: *Once all of the candles are blown out, we will sit silently in the dark and allow ourselves to grieve the release of control over the outcomes (the room should be totally dark at this point).*

Invite God's peace and presence to rush in. Remind your own heart of this truth: On the third day the Son will rise from the grave (Matthew 17:23) with restoration in His wings (Malachi 4:2).

Remain in this symbolic grave of darkness and silence for as long as you are able.

END OPTION 1 - RESOLVE: Close in prayer together, pray for one another, process your experience together, encourage one another.

END OPTION 2 - LINGER: Remain in silence for the remainder of the night. Go to bed in silence. Break silence first thing Saturday morning. Process and pray together as desired.

Note: This practice is only half of the story—please continue with the Day 2 & 3 practices to explore peace in the unknown and the hope of resurrection.