



JOURNEY - TO THE - TOMB

A MOVEMENT FROM GOOD FRIDAY TO EASTER

We're doing something extra special this year for Easter! This might be your first Easter as a microchurch. Our hub team is providing you with the tools to make Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday meaningful for your community.

We believe in the power of you opening your home or making space for those nearest to you, and we feel like Easter is an incredible moment to be present in the places we already do life.

You can choose to practice Good Friday as a microchurch or with your immediate family. Holy Saturday, or the Sabbath rest, will give us intentional space to be with God. Easter we will celebrate through feasting and remembering as microchurches.

Adapt these suggested rhythms as needed. We'd encourage you to read through them beforehand to have a sense of what to expect. The journey is the experience.

Christ is Risen!

DAY 1 // GOOD FRIDAY

OVERVIEW

This Good Friday practice is designated to explore Jesus' crucifixion, death, and burial in the context of your home at nightfall. The emphasis is on laying our plans, disappointments and unfulfilled hopes in the grave with Jesus. During this practice we will explore the spiritual disciplines of silence, self-examination and simplicity.

PRACTICE // LIGHTS OUT

SILENCE | STILLNESS | SELF-EXAMINATION

HOW TO

Begin the Good Friday Experience by lighting candles around your home and turning off all electric lights. This can be done as soon as the sun begins to set and will create an atmosphere of simplicity and calm in your living space.

The goal of this part of the practice is to come to a point of total darkness by the end of the reading and reflection time. Just before you start the reading, extinguish all extra candles except one candle placed in front of each household member (or one shared candle for everyone).

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 the experience of disappointment and grief through the eyes of the disciples.

READ TOGETHER: The Crucifixion & Burial of Christ. **Luke 23:1-48**

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: Imagine yourself as one of the disciples. What emotions are you feeling?

READER: They say grief is the price we pay for love, but perhaps it's also the price we pay for 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 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 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

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 this 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 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 OF DAY 1 - 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.

DAY 2 // THE SABBATH

OVERVIEW

For today's practice we will be digging into the disciplines of fasting and sabbath rest, and exploring the art of being a "non-anxious presence" in the transitional seasons of our lives. This wilderness practice is designed to be a full-day experience but you are welcome to modify it for your context.

CONTEXT

According to the Jewish calendar Saturday is the last day of the week and is observed as the Sabbath. As you know, Sabbath is the day of the week set aside from the other six to pause all work, to rest, and to reflect on the goodness and provision God. The foundations for the Sabbath come from the Genesis account of creation in which God crafted the universe in six days and on the seventh day He rested after declaring His handiwork "finished" (John 19:30 and Genesis 2:1). But what's even more interesting is that God didn't just create Sabbath for humans, He observed it Himself. What a beautiful idea: the God who rests invites us to do the same.

Meanwhile, back in the Easter story it's the Sabbath. Where do we find Jesus? Sabbathing in the grave. This isn't a coincidence and it isn't the first time we find Jesus having a nap (if you will) in the middle of a generally intense situation. Remember the infamous storm on the sea of Galilee? The one where Jesus is sleeping in the stern of the boat while the disciples are totally freaking out (Mark 4:35-41)? Despite the massive responsibility of being "the hope of the world" Jesus somehow manages to live from a posture of Sabbath rest even in the midst of crisis; a quality that is rarely seen in our modern, frantic world.

So today we'll choose to embrace Sabbath in the hope of becoming what Edwin Friedman calls a "non-anxious presence". Like Jesus, we will slow down, lay fear to rest, and allow ourselves to be at ease even within the darkest of graves or the most turbulent of storms. With an abiding trust in the God who makes all things new, we will lean fully into the wilderness of waiting, believing that new life will eventually spring up from the grave of our hopes. Let's receive the gift of Sabbath together.

PRACTICE // TECH BLACKOUT

SABBATH | FASTING | PRESENCE

HOW TO

As a practical expression of Sabbath, today's practice is built around a full day fast from the internet and technology. The challenge for today is to unplug from the chaos of our heavily entertained and hyper connected world and to choose to be present to our surroundings, to one another, and to the input of our five senses. We recommend the following steps:

- 1. Set a start and end time together:** Ideally that would be a 24 hour period starting Friday at dusk and ending Saturday at dusk, however any amount of time will do (minimum 4 hours for any level of impact). The longer you go, the more you will receive from this practice.
- 2. For the best results:** Go dark on all forms of digital entertainment. Turn off all electronic devices, mobile phones, tvs, laptops, gaming systems, etc.
- 3. Turn off your internet router:** Unplug or power down.

4. Place all mobile devices in a box or basket: Put them somewhere out of sight.

5. Contact if needed: You may want to let a few people know how to get in touch with you in case of emergency but emphasize that you won't be available for regular communication (see social media option below).

SABBATH PRACTICES

SCRIPTURE | CREATIVITY | PRESENCE | PRAYER | READING

READ SCRIPTURE

Most of the library of scripture was written to be read out loud in large portions. Gather your household, choose a book of the Bible or a large section of scripture and read it out loud together. Consider taking turns with each chapter and try to avoid discussion until you've completed the entire reading (alternately, try reading an entire book of the Bible in one sitting by yourself).

GET CREATIVE

Embrace the joy of making, building, drawing, crafting, sculpting, baking, and shaping. Make sure you're doing it from a posture of rest vs. a desire to "accomplish a task".

GET CREATIVE

Spend time outdoors walking or hiking at a leisurely pace. Be intentionally slow to enjoy the fresh air and time together. Look for God is revealing himself to you in creation.

BE HERE NOW

Practice being extra-present where you are. Pause for a few minutes during the day and thank God for the five senses each by name. Be still and take time to observe what you hear, smell, and see. Enjoy the taste of a good meal or the feel of a comfortable blanket or a bath. Spend time outdoors walking or hiking at a leisurely place. Be intentionally slow to enjoy the fresh air, time together and how God reveals himself in nature.

PRAYER

Walking is a great way to spend a Sabbath day in active leisure. A prayer walk is a journey with a spiritual purpose. Walk with the intention to observe the goodness of God wherever you can find it. Breathe in the fresh air, feel the stable ground beneath your feet.

BOOK & BLANKET

As a household invite your crew to spend an agreed amount of time curled up with a book and a blanket. Once this time is up come together and share what each of you have read and learned.

END NOTES

End your Sabbath day by going outside together and looking at the stars (if you can see them). Remind your household about the early wakeup for Easter sunrise.

DAY 3 // THE GARDEN TOMB

EASTER SUNDAY | MORNING

OVERVIEW

This is the third and final practice of Easter weekend. Well done for making it this far! Today we will be doing our practice in two parts and we'll try the disciplines of celebration and "nature immersion" (the discipline of experiencing God through nature) which will help us explore our part in the ever-expanding kingdom of God among us.

CONTEXT

God's pre-eminent act of creation in Genesis was literally to breathe His spirit- life (in Hebrew: "ruach") into the first human in the midst of a beautiful garden. It is absolutely no coincidence then that God's first act of new creation was to breathe His spirit- life (in Greek: "pneuma") into the crucified Jesus and raise Him from the grave—in the middle of a garden no less.

In the first garden God gave full responsibility to Adam to be fruitful and multiply and take care of creation but the mandate was quickly lost to the temptation of humanistic pride. Now, in the second garden we have Jesus rising again as Adam 2.0, the literal image of God in human form, and He's inviting all of us to recultivate our original God-given calling. Empowered by the Spirit we are commissioned once again with the words of our Creator echoing in our souls: be sent and fill the Earth with the garden of God's goodness (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8)!

It is from this place of divine purpose that we rediscover our carefully buried hopes. The seeds we sowed in the grave on Friday blossom a hundred thousand times more beautiful when

they grow up in the eternal soil of the Kingdom of Heaven. What was once finite and destined for decay is now infinite; marked for heaven, stripped of all our brokenness and totally dedicated to God. This is the power of Easter.

PRACTICE ONE // SUNRISE WORSHIP

NATURE-IMMERSION | STILLNESS | PRAYER

HOW TO

This practice is simple. Rise early and find a place (wether in your home, in your yard or somewhere else) to watch the sunrise.

Below are a few suggestions for this practice:

- Ideally you'll want to be awake and in location before dawn.
- Google: "dawn time" for your local area. The sky starts getting light about 30 minutes before the actual sunrise depending on where you are located.
- If you choose to watch the sunrise indoors, find an East-facing window with good view of the skyline. Open shades/curtains and leave all indoor lights off allowing the rising sun slowly illuminate your home.
- If outdoors, consider bringing chairs, blankets, and hot beverages. Keep the heart of this practice in mind as you reflect on the resurrected King. A posture of silence and stillness really serves this moment best. Feel free to read the following if it seems appropriate.

READ

Today we acknowledge and celebrate the inauguration of God's new creation. The Kingdom of Heaven—God's vision for a flourishing world - is expanding among us, growing into a mountain that covers the whole earth (Daniel 2:35). As we experience the sunrise (the Son rise) let's take a moment to commit again to God's invitation of new beginnings and to becoming the co-creators we were born to be. God has empowered and equipped each of us with unique gifts, purposes and positions to join Him in cultivating a stunning garden that will fill the whole world. Wherever we set our feet and whatever we touch with our hands should begin to look like heaven on Earth—more beautiful, more whole, and more alive than ever before. Today is a unique moment in the year to remind ourselves of this and to come into alignment once again with God's exquisite plan to restore the world around us.

A Note About Sunrises:

For some of us, the sun will rise in a clear sky, sharp, striking, and beautiful. For others, the sunrise will be all but invisible, fading in behind cloudy skies and hidden from sight. Whatever your sunrise experience is, consider the ways in which God's Kingdom is clearly visible to you sometimes and then in other seasons His goodness and new life feels hidden or maybe even non-existent. When it comes to the sun, we have faith that it rises whether we can see its brilliance directly or not. In the same way, hold on to faith that the Kingdom of God is rising—illuminating our world with truth and inviting those in darkness to come to His great light (Matthew 4:16-17), even in times when you can't see it.

SOCIAL MEDIA

OPTIONAL: Share a photo of your sunrise moment on Facebook and Instagram tagging Renaissance.

PRACTICE TWO //

EASTER BRUNCH CELEBRATION

CELEBRATION | BREAKING OF BREAD | COMMUNITY

HOW TO

Part two of this Easter morning might just be the highlight of the weekend. Brunch!! The brief is simple: watch the Easter teaching together and prepare a brunch feast, break bread and raise a toast to the King and the Kingdom and then eat together as a household.

While most of the spiritual disciplines tend to be things we find difficult or challenging, celebration can feel like an anomaly as it's something that comes naturally to many of us. In this case, the real challenge of celebration is to do it with purpose and intention, to choose to celebrate the things that God values. This morning, we will funnel our focus and intentions into the resurrection of

Jesus, the coming of the Kingdom and the ways in which we are invited to bring Heaven to Earth.

THE STEPS

1. Watch the teaching provided by Renaissance which highlights the Easter story.
2. Prepare the brunch feast together. Make sure everyone gets to participate in the cooking, baking, chopping, serving, etc. This is a valuable act of co-creation.
3. **OPTIONAL:** Set the table and decorate like you would for a party. This is Easter. Let's celebrate.

4. Invite your community to sit down at the table.
5. Pour glasses of whatever you're drinking and prepare to give toasts (yes, the "cheers" kind of toast).
6. End the toasts with a short prayer and invite your crew to say the Lord's Prayer together.
7. **PROMPT:** What resonates most in you about the Easter story?
8. Eat and Celebrate. Linger in conversation.
9. Have everyone pitch in to clean up.
10. Nap and enjoy the rest and contentment Jesus' resurrection provides.

IMPORTANT NOTE

If you happen to be on your own or know of someone who is having Easter weekend by themselves, why not invite them to toast and pray together. In this way we can come together as the wider family of God.