

# LIGHT *in the* DARKNESS



HOLY WEEK EXPERIENCE FOR FAMILIES



A MINISTRY OF YOUTHFRONT  
[youthfront.com](http://youthfront.com)

# How to use this guide

## What to Expect

This guide is designed to provide your family a hands-on way to experience Holy Week. Each day there is an activity you can do together to retell the story of the last week of Jesus' life.

This Holy Week experience features a candlelit centerpiece that works a bit like a reverse Advent wreath. You will begin with all the candles lit on Palm Sunday and Monday, and then extinguish one candle each day, and thus the centerpiece is dark on Saturday. Finally, all candles will be relit on Easter!

Begin with a plate or dish for your centerpiece and five candles. I use a red candle for Good Friday and place it in the center, but you could also do the candles in a row if you were creating this on an altar space. This can also be created for your coffee table rather than your dining table.

Keep in mind, you don't have to do all of this, just start. Do a couple of days. Do what works for you and your family. Feel free to modify the questions for the ages of your kids. My family started with just the candles and purple cloth activity the first year. Get your family to join in the creation of the centerpiece and getting the props together if you like. Or just use what you have! I love this way to pray, because we remember much more of what we do than what we hear.

## Supplies

You'll want to gather the following supplies in advance. If you can't find the exact items described, don't worry. You can use what you have and make it work. This is just a guide and you can make it your own.

- ☐ **Candles (4 white, 1 red)**
- ☐ **Dish or plate that will hold candles and be large enough for extra things to be added to it**
- ☐ **Printed fern cutouts (included) OR real fern or palm branches**
- ☐ **Printed jacket cutouts (included)**
- ☐ **Coins, at least one for each person (pennies or plastic gold coins)**
- ☐ **Small bowl of olive oil, vegetable oil or bottle of perfume**
- ☐ **Printed kiss cutouts (included) OR Hershey's Kisses, enough for everyone**
- ☐ **Printed paper placemats (included)**
- ☐ **Purple fabric (or any color) cut into 3x6 inch strips, make a half inch cut in the short end of each strip so they can easily be torn into two parts**
- ☐ **Piece of muslin or black cloth large enough to cover the entire centerpiece**
- ☐ **Band-aids, one for each person**
- ☐ **Small candles, one for each person (you can use small birthday candles)**

# Day 1: Palm Sunday

## PREPARE

Color and cut out the jackets and palm branches (see pg. 12) or gather branches if using real fern or palm branches. Light all five candles.

## READ

Read the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem. Choose one of these passages:  
Matthew 21:1-10, Luke 19:28-40, Mark 11:1-11, John 12:12-19

## REFLECT

Talk about what it would be like to be in the crowd when Jesus rode into town. What do you see, hear, smell? Are you excited, scared, angry like the Pharisees?

## RESPOND

Place fern branches and jackets around the centerpiece plate to symbolize the entry into Jerusalem.



# Day 2: Monday

## PREPARE

Light all of the candles. Leave palm branches around the plate for a couple of days and bring a bowl of coins to the table. As you begin your time together, have someone blow out one of the candles.

## READ

Read the story of Jesus cleansing the temple. Choose one of these passages:  
Luke 19:45-48, Matthew 21:12-17

## REFLECT

Pass around the coins so that each person receives one. Hold the coin in your hand and think about the scene. What does it look like, smell like, what do you see? What do you notice?

The money changers were blocking people's access to prayer and worship, especially the Gentiles. Think about your own life.

- What things block you from prayer and worship right now?
- What things, like the tables of the money changers, keep you from being with God?  
Consider your daily habits (ie. social media, texting, video games, general busyness) and feelings (ie. fear, worry, lack of trust) that may be getting in the way.

## RESPOND

As you hold your coin, talk to God about these things. Allow Jesus to hold these things for you and ask Jesus to take away these blocks. Then take time to talk about this as a family.



# Day 3: Tuesday

## PREPARE

Light all of the candles. Bring your bowl of oil or perfume to the table. As you begin, have someone extinguish two of the candles.

## READ

Read the story of Jesus' anointing at Bethany. Choose one of these passages:  
John 12:1-11, Mark 14:1-9, Matthew 26:6-13

## REFLECT

The woman in the story gave Jesus her most valued possession. She honored him with this gift of expensive perfume.

What is your most valuable possession?

It might be a material thing.

It might be a talent that you have.

It might be your health.

## RESPOND

Are you willing to give this to Jesus? Are you willing to give up your most valuable, most precious possession in order to honor Jesus? Talk to each other about this.

Pass around the oil or perfume and dab it on your forehead as a symbol of your willingness to honor Jesus.



# Day 4: Wednesday

## PREPARE

Color and cut out lips (see pg. 13) or gather Hershey's Kisses and lay them out on the table. Light all of the candles. As you begin, have someone extinguish three of the candles.

## READ

Read the story of Judas betraying Jesus. Choose one of these passages:  
Matthew 26:14-21, Mark 14:10-11, Luke 22:1-6

## REFLECT

This week, Jesus was betrayed by two of his friends, Judas and Peter. Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Peter denied that he even knew Jesus.

Has anyone ever betrayed you? How did that feel?

## RESPOND

Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5:44)  
Take time to pray for the people who have betrayed you or people or groups that are your enemies.

What about you? Have you betrayed Jesus lately? With your actions or inactions? Bad attitude, lack of faith, etc. Talk to God about these things.

Eat a Hershey's Kiss as a symbol of your willingness to forgive those who have betrayed you and as a symbol of your need for forgiveness. Or write your name on the lips cutout and place it on the centerpiece dish/plate.



# Day 5: Thursday

## PREPARE

Add a piece of purple cloth under the candles to form a cross. Have extra pieces of purple cloth, enough for each person in your group. (Cloth pieces should be about 3x6 inches with a cut in the narrow side ) You will use these on Good Friday. Have a printed placemat (see pg. 14) laid out for each family member.

Light all of the candles. As you begin, have someone extinguish four candles.

## READ

Read the story of The Last Supper. As you read, imagine the scene. Picture the colors, the smells, the atmosphere of the room. Choose one of these passages to read:

Mark 14:12-26, John 13:1-17, Luke 22:7-30, Matthew 26:26-30

## REFLECT

Consider that it was Jesus' last meal with his disciples, his closest friends. If it was your last meal, what would you be eating and who would be at your table?

## RESPOND

Take time to write out or draw your menu for your last supper and name the people at your table on your placemat. Take time to pray for the family and friends you have listed.

# Day 6: Good Friday

## PREPARE

Light only the red candle. Pass around the pieces of purple cloth.

## READ

Read the story of Jesus' Crucifixion. Choose one of these passages to read:  
Matthew 27:32-54, Luke 23:26-49, Mark 15:21-40

Extinguish the candle. Say: "IT IS FINISHED."

## REFLECT

After listening to the passage, have everyone rip their pieces of purple cloth in half, symbolic of the temple curtain being torn separating the Holy of Holies when Jesus died on the cross.

When the candle has had time to cool, have someone cover the centerpiece with a cloth symbolizing Jesus' burial.

## RESPOND

The curtain was ripped top to bottom! We now have a direct relationship with God!

How does it feel to know that you are not separated from God even in death?  
How does it feel to know that Jesus knows and understands your suffering and pain?  
What things do you need Jesus to finish for you in your life?

Talk to Jesus about this and share with someone else today.



# Day 7: Saturday

## PREPARE

All the candles are out. The strips of cloth are on the plate. Entire centerpiece is dark and covered with "burial cloth." Bring bandaids to the table.

## REFLECT

Jesus' disciples, his friends, have abandoned him and are hiding and afraid. His body is buried in a borrowed tomb.

How are you feeling today about the death of Jesus? What if you didn't know that Sunday was going to mean resurrection? Talk about this.

## RESPOND

Pass out bandaids. Take time to pray for anyone you know who is suffering, sick or grieving a loved one. Place a bandaid on your wrist as a reminder to pray for these people over the next few days.

# Day 8: Easter Sunday



## PREPARE

You can do today's activity at breakfast or around another meal with your family.

Uncover and RELIGHT ALL THE CANDLES! Have all the centerpiece candles lit before people sit down for the meal. Bring small candles to the table.

## READ

Read the Resurrection Story together! Choose one of the following passages:  
Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-18, Luke 24

## REFLECT

Pass around the birthday or other small candles. Light your candle from the centerpiece as a symbol of Jesus' resurrection and the Light returning to the world. Now we can share that Light and his love with everyone we meet.

Say together, "CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED."

What are some ways you've seen or experienced resurrection and new life this week?

## RESPOND

Spend some time thanking Jesus for his love for you and all the good things that are in your world.

Pray for places that need the Light and Resurrection of Jesus today. Consider using these prayer prompts:

- Pray for hospitals, places of conflict and poverty.
- Pray for your community, your neighborhood, to see and experience more of the love of Jesus.
- Pray for specific needs you know about.
- Pick a country to pray for. Pray that the healing love and light of Jesus will be seen there.
- Use a map of the world, globe or map online to pray with this week as you ask Jesus to shine his light and love in these places.

## EASTER PRAYER

"Jesus, help us to see your light and experience your resurrection today and every day. Thank you that we are Resurrection People able to share your love and life with others. AMEN."

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## EXTRA

You can create a prayer collage (cutting out pictures or words from magazines or drawing them) to remind you to pray for things in your world that need resurrection.

# Easter Blessings from Youthfront

We hope that this devotional has been a blessing to you and your family. May you have a meaningful and joyous Easter celebrating our risen Savior.

At Youthfront, our mission is “bringing youth into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ,” and our YF Family ministry was born out of a desire to come alongside parents and families, providing tools and resources to help them raise healthy children with strong spiritual foundations.

We’re pleased to introduce this resource as a product of Youthfront’s *Presence-Centered Parenting and Caregiving* initiative. Funded by a Lilly Endowment Inc. grant through its Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative, this effort is focused on helping parents and families actively engage in the Christian formation of their children.

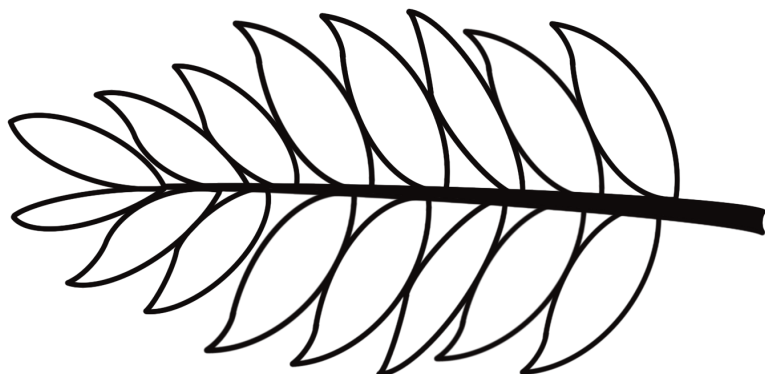
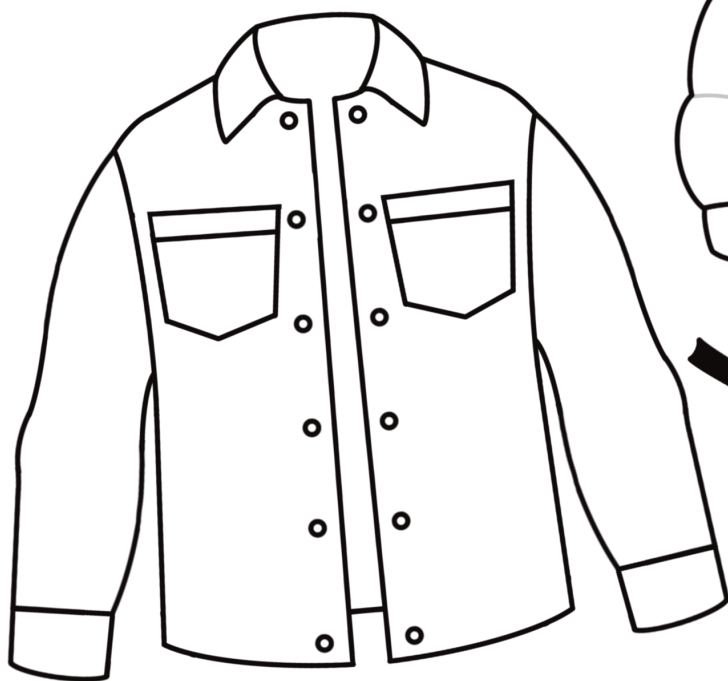
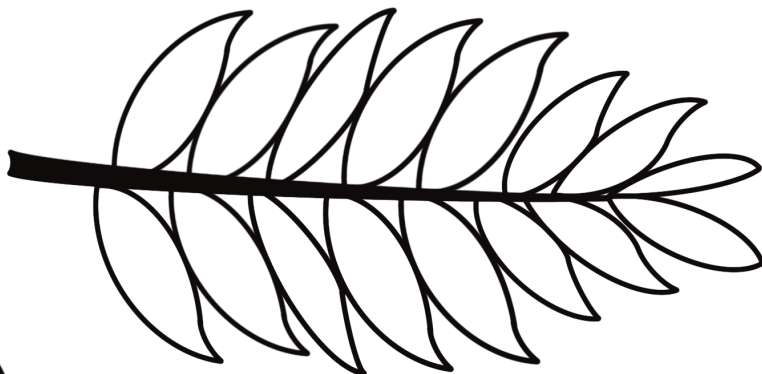
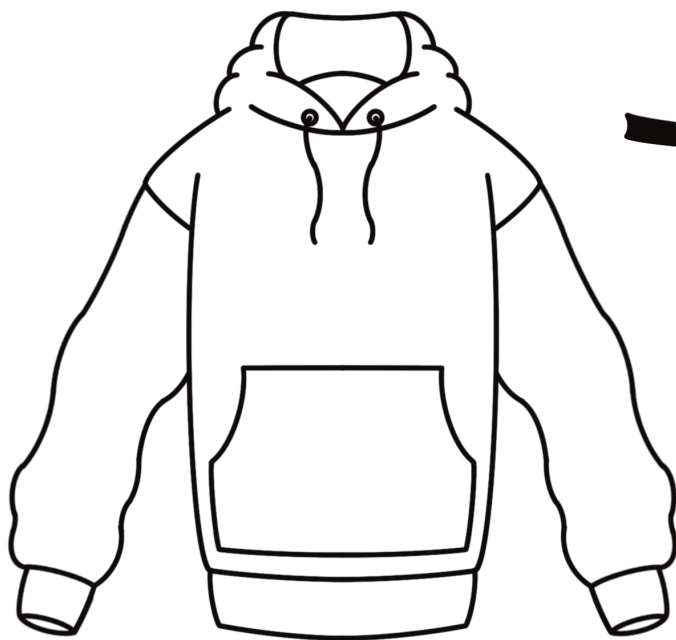
To learn more about Youthfront and the programs we offer, visit [youthfront.com](http://youthfront.com).

## ***Acknowledgments***

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Jacket cutouts - Use for Day 1, Palm Sunday



*Color and cut out the coats and branches.*

