

# alive in love

EASTER  
2023



## A five-day journey to exploring Jesus

### Easter Bible reading and reflection guide

#### Introduction

In today's world, it can be hard to feel genuinely fulfilled, joyful and hopeful. A fast-paced life, physical and mental health challenges, cost of living struggles and overwhelming stress can be so draining.

God never wanted our lives to be like that.

God wants us to experience abundant life. To feel alive, purposeful and overflowing with love.

If you're interested in discovering this for yourself this Easter, we invite you onto a five-day journey of exploring Jesus and how his life and love open the way for a meaningful life.

"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9, NIV).



## Day 1 Palm Sunday:

# Jesus – King of the whoever

### Read

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

– John 3:16, NIV

“When he [Jesus] came near ... the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: ‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! ...’”

– Luke 19:37-38, NIV

Throughout his time on Earth, Jesus did not discriminate. He dined with, healed and spoke to people who many others may have overlooked. In fact, Jesus said, “whenever you give a banquet, invite people who are poor, who have disabilities, who are limping, and people who are blind” (Luke 14:13, NASB).

We hear a similar message in John 3:16 – that God welcomes “whoever believes in him” to have life.

The Bible recounts a part of Jesus’ life when he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, while the crowd loudly praised him. They waved palm branches like a flag – this is why Christians now remember this event as Palm Sunday. The author of the events refers to this crowd as those who had seen Jesus’ miracles (Luke 19).

This may have included the man whose sight was restored and all those who witnessed, the woman healed of her long-term sickness, all the children who were invited to meet him in a nation where children were unimportant, the tax collector who was a thief, and so on.

These people were from all walks of life, but they joyfully acknowledged Jesus as their friend and King. Why? Because Jesus first acknowledged them. He showed them love and acceptance simply because of who they are, not for what they had done or what the world thought of them.

Jesus’ love is not confined to the pages of this Bible story. His love is alive today and ready to be accepted by those who believe in him. He welcomes everyone to acknowledge him as King.

### Reflect

- What barriers do you feel would typically prevent you from associating with a king? (Social status, culture, mistakes you’ve made, etc.)
- How does it feel to know that Jesus’ love for you isn’t limited by those barriers?

### Pray

Thank you, Jesus, for your love and acceptance. I know I am not perfect and have made mistakes, but I accept you as King over my life. Help me to be loving and accepting to other people from all walks of life. Amen.



## Day 2 The Last Supper: Jesus – a humble servant

### Read

“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”

– John 13:14-15, NIV

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

– John 13:34-35, NIV

Throughout his ministry, Jesus spoke to his disciples (followers) about love, humility and caring for vulnerable people. In the hours before his death, he once again put his words into action.

Now remember, just a few days ago, crowds had praised Jesus as their King. But Jesus didn’t see this as something to cling to. He once said he came into the world “to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28, NIV).

It was Passover, an important Jewish festival, and Jesus was gathered with his disciples to eat. (Christians call this the Last Supper as it was Jesus’ final meal before his death.) During the meal, Jesus got up and began washing his disciples’ feet.

This may seem strange, except that during the time of Jesus’ life on Earth, the roads were dusty and dirty. It was often the job of a lowly servant to wash people’s feet as they entered a home.

So as a bold and significant act of love and humility, Jesus washed his disciples’ feet. Then, he told them to do likewise. “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you ... you must love one another” (John 13:15, 34).

Jesus’ actions show us that God’s Kingdom is about love and service for each other. It doesn’t matter who you are or who the other person is. It doesn’t matter if you’ve made mistakes or bad choices, or if everything in your life is going well.

You are loved by God because he made you. Your purpose in this world is to love him then love others. When we express that purpose of servanthood love in action, we can feel truly alive.

### Reflect

- What are your thoughts about a King acting in such a humble and servant-like manner?
- How does it feel to consider that your purpose in life is to love God and love others? How can you practically live that out, for example, by serving others?

### Pray

Thank you, Jesus, for loving me and coming into the world as a humble servant. Thank you for giving me a purpose: to love you and love others with humility. Help me to live this out. Amen.



## Day 3 Good Friday: Jesus – the greatest sacrifice

### Read

“For the greatest love of all is a love that sacrifices all. And this great love is demonstrated when a person sacrifices his life for his friends.”

– John 15:13, TPT

“He [Jesus] appeared as a man. He was humble and obeyed God completely. He did this even though it led to his death. Even worse, he died on a cross!”

– Philippians 2:8, NIRV

We all make sacrifices. We sacrifice time with our friends and family so we can earn an income. We sacrifice a sleep-in so we can exercise. We sacrifice our finances so we can donate to charity.

A sacrifice is simply giving up one thing for the sake of another. But a sacrifice is only worthwhile if we value the outcome.

Jesus made a sacrifice for us. That’s the message of Good Friday. When it comes to understanding why, we need to go back to the beginning of the Bible. And in the beginning was God. Our perfect and holy creator. He made the world and everything in it, including humans, so that he could have a relationship with us.

When the first humans made a mistake – they disobeyed God’s one rule – sin entered the world. It broke that perfect relationship. God didn’t want it to end that way, so he sent his son, Jesus, into the world to bridge the gap between perfection (God and Jesus) and brokenness (us). Jesus was the sacrifice, and he was willing to lay down his life as a sacrifice because he highly valued people being in relationship with him.

As we read on day one in John 3:16, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son” because he wanted everyone to have life with him in Heaven after they die.

On Good Friday, we remember the sacrifice of Jesus. First, he gave up his home in Heaven with his Father (God) to live on Earth – where he experienced pain, temptation and heartbreak. Then, Jesus willingly subjected himself to ridicule, hurt and death out of love for the whole world. He did this because he loves you, he wants to be in relationship with you today and to offer you everlasting life.

As today’s Bible verse says, this love is the “greatest love of all” because it is a “love that sacrifices all”.

### Reflect

- Are the day-to-day sacrifices you make worthwhile? Are there any you would like to – or could – change?
- How does it feel to be valued so highly that someone was willing to give up everything for your sake?

### Pray

Dear Jesus, thank you for sacrificing your life for me, so I can be in relationship with you and God. Thank you for your act of great love so I can have everlasting life. Amen.



## Day 4 Easter Sunday: Jesus – he is alive

### Read

“They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive!”  
– Luke 24:23, NLT

“For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.”  
– 1 Corinthians 15:22, CSB

For three or so years, Jesus’ disciples walked alongside him as he healed the sick, fed thousands of people with a few small loaves, and spoke incredible wisdom. They placed their belief and hope in him as their way to connect with God again. Imagine their grief and confusion when Jesus died and was placed in a tomb.

On Sunday, some female followers of Jesus went to anoint his body with spices – as per their Jewish custom. When they reached his tomb, there was no dead body. Only angels announcing Jesus had risen.

In the moments and days afterwards, Jesus revealed himself to his many followers in various locations, eating with them and explaining the purpose of his death and resurrection. He restored their hope and assured them that he is their way – and all people’s way – to connect with God. How?

The beginning of the Bible with the first humans – Adam and Eve – is the start of the answer. Their mistakes led to brokenness, shame and all the consequences of sin, including death (Genesis 3:1-7).

Because death came through a human, everlasting life comes through a human, but one who is also divine, that is – Jesus Christ. “For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22, CSB).

The only way Jesus could overpower death was to die. There is no coming back to life without death first. Out of his love for us, Jesus died and then became alive again. Because he rose from the grave, then went up to Heaven, he offers us a second life. We can be alive in Heaven after we die because of his love. That’s definitely something to celebrate on Easter Sunday!

### Reflect

- What emotions, thoughts or feelings do you think you would have experienced as one of Jesus’ followers on the first Good Friday – seeing Jesus die – and then on Easter Sunday – hearing and seeing him alive?
- How do you feel about the idea of having everlasting life in Heaven after you die on Earth? Does it bring you hope and peace for the trials of this life?

### Pray

Dear Jesus, thank you for overcoming death and coming back to life! Thank you for being alive in Heaven and offering me everlasting life through you. Amen.





## Day 5: Alive in the love of Jesus

### Read

“I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows].”

– John 10:10b, AMP

“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another ... if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

– 1 John 4:11-12, NIV

From Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, we've looked at Jesus as a King, a friend to all, a humble servant, an example of sacrificial love and as alive after death. It's a great snapshot into who Jesus is but that's not where Easter ends.

The true message of Easter is something that changes our daily lives. After Jesus rose back to life, his followers were never the same again. They experienced his love in such a transformational way that they began to live overflowing and abundant lives. They became truly alive in his love.

Jesus' love is available to do the same for us today. He says, “I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows],” (John 10:10b, AMP).

When the world offers us stress about the cost of living and health concerns, anxiety over safety, heartache and many other crises, Jesus offers us something greater and deeper. Life will still throw us chaos and trials, but that feeling of worthlessness, incompleteness, dissatisfaction? Gone. That constant nagging feeling that something is not right, that fear, that lack of purpose? Gone.

In its place: worth, completeness, satisfaction, acceptance, peace, purpose, inner joy, hope, freedom – and so much more. That's life in overflowing abundance. That's what it means to feel truly alive.

And out of that overflow, out of that repaired connection with God, comes love for others. When we love others in our words and actions, God's love is made complete in us. We feel complete. We feel alive.

Don't let this Easter be just another long weekend on the calendar or a nice story – allow it to transform your life. Because of the great love of Jesus, you can experience a life that is truly alive – with hope for everlasting life in Heaven, but also an overflowing and abundant life today.

### Reflect

- Make a list of burdens or feelings you carry that you would like to swap. Ask Jesus to swap them for things that align with his abundant life.
- If you have not accepted Jesus' love and abundance for your life, is now the right time? Learn more about how to do this [salvationarmy.org.au/our-faith/easter/salvation-prayer](https://salvationarmy.org.au/our-faith/easter/salvation-prayer)
- If you have already accepted Jesus' love into your life, how can you become even more alive in his love?

### Pray

Dear Jesus, thank you for Easter – a time to remember your life, death and resurrection. Thank you for your love and for your promise of abundant life. I want to experience that today and into the future. Amen.





## A final word

Thank you for joining us on this journey over the Easter week. We hope and pray it has helped you understand more about Jesus and what his life means for your life. We encourage you to continue your journey of becoming alive in love by:

- [Connecting with your local Salvos](#)
- Reaching out to a trusted Christian you know and having a conversation
- [Finding ways to share love with others](#)
- [Reading stories of people whose lives have become alive in God's love](#)

Find links for all the above and more at:  
[salvationarmy.org.au/Easter](https://salvationarmy.org.au/Easter)