

Lenten LIGHTS



Eight Biblical Devotions to Prepare for Easter

BEGINS SATURDAY, MARCH 27, 2021

Introduction

USING THESE READINGS

Each reading begins with a few sentences that summarize the thought for the day. All the rest is Scripture—letting God speak to us directly from His Word.

This is a daily devotional designed to begin on March 27, 2021. If you choose, it also can be used together with seven candles, representing the Light of the World. This leaves Saturday, the day before Easter, with no devotional, a reminder of the emptiness experienced by Jesus' followers between his death and resurrection.

WITHOUT CANDLES

These pages may be used simply for personal or family reading and meditation in preparation for Easter. In that case, please ignore the bracketed candle instructions within each reading.

WITH CANDLES

The readings may also be used in conjunction with any grouping of seven candles. On the first day, all seven should be burning as you begin reading the first devotional. Bracketed instructions within the reading tell you when to snuff out one candle. On the second day, six candles burn as you begin reading, and you snuff out one of them when instructed, and so on. On Good Friday, the last candle is extinguished. Then on Easter, there are instructions within the reading to light all seven candles.

The Symbolism of the Seven Candles

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5). But for a while it seemed as if the darkness was overcoming—for a long while.

Your seven candles symbolize the Light of the World—the Light that was God's glory and that illuminated God for us—the Light that, in the end, seemed to have been darkened. As we move through the season preceding Easter, the candles are snuffed

out one by one, until all are dark on Good Friday, when Jesus died and the earth was covered with shadow. Darkness apparently had won. The Light of the World had been extinguished. It was finished.

But NO! Easter brings resurrection! Life! Return from death! The Light has won and all the candles burn as we praise Him—the Light of the World, the Bright Morning Star, the Glory of God.

First Reading

DEVOTIONAL

 [All seven candles lit before reading]

God created the universe—from galaxies to water spiders. He created the breeze that calms us and the hurricane that terrifies us. All of it is to show us what He is like, to display His glory and personality.

BUT people have let themselves be blinded to the truth. Some take all of God's creation for granted and say it just got there somehow—no need for God. Others worship the things that were created and don't see God behind it.

John 1:1-5 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Genesis 1:1-2:3 (summarized) – In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. . . . And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. . . . Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

Romans 1:18-23 – For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

 [Snuff out one candle. Do not light it again until Easter]

Romans 1:24-25 – Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

FAMILY FOCUS

- **Name or think of some things you feel are beautiful that God created.**
- **Is there anything that you see that is so complex or amazing that it points you to the designer (God)?**
- **What scripture tells us that God has always been and will always be with us?**
Read John 1:1-5.
- **How can we give thanks to God for His creation?** *Think in terms of enjoying nature together, loving the people God has made, saying thank you, taking care of what He has given us.*

Spend time talking, praying, singing, or any other activity to give thanks to God as a family tonight.

Second Reading

DEVOTIONAL

 [Six candles lit before reading]

God created people to give Him glory. And He created a perfect place for them—a place that reflected His glory. He gave them everything they could need or want for happiness.

BUT they listened to God's enemy. They didn't really believe God's gifts to them were enough for them. So they turned their backs on God, and they lost their perfect place to live and their perfect friendship with God. Now, they could see pain and futility and death in their future.

Genesis 2:8-3:19 (summarized) – And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.... And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” . .

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?...”

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate....

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”

He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I

commanded you not to eat?”

The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”

Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate”....

To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children....”

And to Adam he said, “Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life.... By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

 **[Snuff the next candle. Do not light again until Easter.]**

Romans 5:12 – Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned....

FAMILY FOCUS

- **What was the first sin?**
- **Do you feel like people still think they know better than God or sometimes don't trust His ways because they think He is trying to take something from them?**
- **What does Adam and Eve's sin mean for us?** *That we are eternally separated from the holy God of the universe.*
- **Does our sin have consequences? If so, what?**

Have each person spend some time thinking about ways they have sinned (done something wrong to hurt God, themselves, and others). Say those times out loud if you like. Turn to God in prayer and ask for forgiveness and plan tangible ways to turn from the sins in your life.

Third Reading

DEVOTIONAL

 [Five candles lit before reading]

Usually God holds back His anger over sin. But one time He let it loose, so we would know how serious it is to turn away from God and toward the darkness, so we would know how great His wrath is against sin.

BUT He did not totally destroy His creation. He showed us His mercy, through Noah.

Genesis 6-9 (summarized) – The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land....”

But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.... Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God....

Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh. . . . Make yourself an ark of gopher wood....

 [Snuff the next candle. Do not light again until Easter.]

“For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark.... And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you....” Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.... The flood continued forty days on the earth.... He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground.... Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark.

But God remembered Noah.... And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.... So Noah went out....

The LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done....”

And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”

FAMILY FOCUS

- **Why did God send the flood?**
- **Why did God pick Noah to build an ark and tell him of his plan to flood the earth?**
- **What does the rainbow mean?**
- **Was God just in His decision to send the flood?** *Yes! The people He created had chosen evil.*
- **What shows God’s mercy and love?** *He saved Noah AND his family and caused the earth to grow/flourish again.*

Discuss God’s equal holiness in justice (there must be payment for sin) and love/mercy (being patient with us and sending Jesus so that all can be saved). It is OK to fear His judgment while counting on His mercy. He is totally holy in His justice and loving and merciful at the same time.

Spend today praying for our church and the world that Christians would be the people that He desires us to be. Give thanks that He allows us to be part of His story of redemption.

Fourth Reading

DEVOTIONAL

 [Four candles lit before reading]

Even before the world was created, God knew that Jesus would be the Way, the Truth and the Life for all who believed in Him. But God didn't just ignore His people then, waiting until the time came for Jesus. No, He gave them a way to be forgiven. If they offered sacrifices from a heart of worship, they could renew their friendship with God as they proved their reliance on Him.

BUT people did not rely on God. Some did not follow His way of sacrifice and worship. And there was an even deeper problem. Many may have followed the outward ritual, but they didn't trust God in their hearts. They didn't love Him. They didn't live lives that reflected His glory.

Leviticus 1:1-4 – The Lord called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘When any one of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock.’

“If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the Lord. He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.”

Psalms 51:16-17 – For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Micah 6:6-8 – With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with a thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Jeremiah 7:21-28 (summarized) – Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel. . . “In the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them: ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.’ But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day. Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.

 **[Snuff the next candle. Do not light again until Easter.]**

“So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you. And you shall say to them, ‘This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips.’”

FAMILY FOCUS

- **How did people ask forgiveness and praise God in Old Testament times?** *Read Leviticus 1.*
- **What does God really want?** *Read Psalm 51.*
- **Can you think of a good thing you have done for a wrong reason?**
- **Would you want someone to help take care of you or do things for you because they should or because they love you and want to?**

God wants a relationship with us. He wants to help change our hearts to be like His, not just “do” or be busy with “good things.”

Share with each other and God things that you love about Him or are thankful for (His character, forgiveness, love, patience, joy, His example...).

Fifth Reading

DEVOTIONAL

 [Three candles lit before reading]

God wants people to be happy. And the only way we can be happy is by following His instructions. So He gave us His Word, His written Word, to make very clear to us where our life comes from and how we can keep it.

BUT again and again we think our ideas are better than God's. And we turn from life to death.

Psalm 19:7-11 – The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Daniel 9:4-11 (summarized) – I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.”

 [Snuff the next candle. Do not light again until Easter.]

“To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame . . . because we have sinned against you. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice.”

FAMILY FOCUS

- **Where do we find God's commands?** *In the Bible. We can start by understanding the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20.*
- **Are God's commands given to help or harm us?** *Name some and talk about how they can help you.*
- **Do you think of the Bible as a rule book or the story of a loving God?**

Spend some time talking about some commands in the Bible that are hard to follow and why you think God put them in the Bible. Thank God that He loves us enough to show us how to live in a way that is pleasing to Him. Share some of your favorite verses with each other.

Sixth Reading

DEVOTIONAL

 [Two candles lit before reading]

God made very sure that we could understand who He is, what He is like, and what He wants for us and what He wants from us. He did this by sending his Son, Jesus. Now we don't have just the written Word, we have the Living Word—a real person. When people watched Jesus, they were seeing God.

BUT even God Himself, God in person, was rejected. People hated Him and rejected His message from God.

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Luke 2:6-7 – And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Isaiah 53:3 – He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

 [Snuff the next candle. Do not light again until Easter.]

Mark 10:32-34 – And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”

FAMILY FOCUS

- **When appearing to Mary and then to Joseph, who did the angel say their son would be?** *God's son, the Savior of the world.*
- **Do you think that Jesus knew from childhood the way His life on earth would end?** *Jesus knew at all times who He was even as a child. See Luke 2:49. He knew He was following the Father's plans.*
- **Why did He go to Jerusalem if He knew what would happen?** *He had to obey what God wanted Him to do and because of His love for us.*

Talk about what it might have been like for the twelve disciples as they heard what would happen to Jesus in Jerusalem. How would you have responded to Jesus and His plan? Thank Jesus for being obedient even to death on the cross.

Seventh Reading

DEVOTIONAL

 [One candle lit before reading]

This was the darkest day in history. The Son of God Himself was killed by people who weren't satisfied simply to reject Him; they couldn't stand to have Him exist. They thought they could put God out of existence.

Mark 15:22-24 – And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take.

Acts 7:51-53 – “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”

Acts 2:22-23 – “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

 [Snuff the last candle. Do not light again until Easter.]

Isaiah 53:4-6 – Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

FAMILY FOCUS

- **Has anyone ever given up anything for you? What?**
- **What are the consequences of our sin?** *Separation from God which required the ultimate sacrifice in Jesus' death on the cross.*

Think of how you have felt when you have done something to hurt someone or regretted doing something you knew you shouldn't. God took ALL of our sin on himself even though He was perfect and never sinned. He was separated from God, alone and despised by everyone around Him.

Talk about how different life would be if Jesus had not died.



[No candles to be lit today.]

Matthew 27:57 – When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.

And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

Eighth Reading

DEVOTIONAL

 [Begin with **NO** candles lit.]

HE IS GOD! He cannot stay dead. HE IS ALIVE. The true Glory of God shines in the world. The Light has won! The Eternal Light! The Bright Morning Star! The Light of the World!

Matthew 28:5-6 – But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.

 [Light all the candles.]

Colossians 1:15-23 – He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

1 Peter 1:3-5 – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

The Lord is risen! The Lord is risen, indeed!

FAMILY FOCUS

- **Who is alive today?** *Jesus!*
- **Who holds all things together?** *Jesus!*
- **Who were you created by and for?** *Jesus!*
- **What does His resurrection mean to those that believe in Him?**

God will live in and work through all people that believe in Him and they will never be alone or without hope because He is alive and with us.

Praise God today that He is alive. Share your favorite worship song, poem, scripture with one another praising Him that your sin debt has been paid.

If you have anyone in your family that does not have a relationship with Jesus, this is a great opportunity to talk about Jesus' sufficiency to meet our need for forgiveness for betraying a Holy God and the promise of eternal life for those who turn to Him and believe in Him.

Some Words of the Season

HOLIDAY

From a combination of two Old English words, halig + daeg—holy day; day set apart for special religious observance.

LENT

From an Old English word related to lengthen. It meant springtime, when the days are lengthening. Now we use it to refer to the days between Ash Wednesday and Easter.

ASH WEDNESDAY

In the Bible, ashes are a sign of mourning, an appropriate symbol as we think of our part in the death of our Lord.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

The night when we look back to the Lord's Last Supper gets its name from the Latin word mandatum—commandment, remembering Jesus' words to the Apostles during the Last Supper, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (John 13:34).

GOOD FRIDAY

This worst day in history is also good because of the reconciliation that comes through the cross.



*For a digital version of this devotional,
visit www.ebccrestview.com/easter-at-emmanuel/*