

Jesus and the Journey to the Cross

RESURRECTION CROSS

Church Leaders and Kid's Ministry Leaders,

The Resurrection Cross is designed so that you can use this ministry tool in your worship service and it will tie in the key verses with a brief devotional thought and prayer. The Resurrection Cross should be used during the four weeks leading up to Easter. You can make this very interactive by recruiting people from your congregation to do the readings and then extinguish one of the candles each week. On Easter Sunday the cross will disappear and in its place will be an Easter Lily that symbolizes Christ's Resurrection. During your Easter Worship celebration, you can use the Easter Litany reading for the whole congregation to participate in.

The Resurrection Cross can be any size and configuration. You can have a cross laying on a table and put the candles at each point of the cross or you can make a standing cross so that it can be seen by all. Check out the photo included for an example.

It is our hope that you can lead your church and families into a meaningful Easter season by engaging them in some devotions and practices that will help them to focus on this most important time of year.



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Week One (the Fourth Sunday before Easter) — Cleaning Out the Inside

Reader #1: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10)

Reader #2: In Psalm 51 David asks God to create a clean heart inside him. He isn't just asking God to forgive his sin, he is asking God to change him on the inside. He knows that his heart needs a total cleaning, and that isn't something he can do on his own. We can't do it on our own either.

Prayer: God of mercy, we don't do the things we are supposed to do. We do things we know we shouldn't do. Forgive us. We know we have sinned. Please wash us, cleanse us, give us a new heart. Help us this week to spend time letting You help us start cleaning out our hearts so that we can make more room for You. Thank you for loving us, even when we fail. We know that you can make us whole again. Amen.

Week Two (the Third Sunday before Easter) — A Conversation with God

Reader #1: Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left his house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. (Mark 1:35)

Reader #2: We can follow Jesus' example through spending time alone in prayer to God. When we do this we can be sure that God wants to communicate with us. This helps us get to know Him more and more. Praying alone is a time where we can be with God. If we never spend time with God, we can never know Him as our friend or as our heavenly Father. Since we are fully human, like Jesus was, we also need to pray to God in order to receive strength, comfort, and love, which helps us make it through each day. God loves to hear our prayers, and He is always ready to listen, no matter where we are or what time it is!

Prayer: El Shama, You are the God who hears and who listens. Thank you for the assurance that you listen to us and that you care about the things we care for. Help us this week to find regular times and a quiet place to spend with You. We want to know you better and want to understand how are working in our lives to draw us into a closer relationship with you. Help us to also pray for others in specific ways that show our love and concern for them. We look forward to seeing you work and move in our lives this week. Amen.

Week Three (the Second Sunday before Easter) — Giving Up to Giving Out

Reader #1: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21)

Reader #2: Jesus warned his followers about collecting treasures on earth because treasures on earth can break, get stolen, wear out, or be destroyed. Treasures on earth can't last forever. So Jesus wants us to store up heavenly treasures instead of earthly treasures. No matter where are treasures are, that's where are heart is going to be. So we can have our focus, our joy, and our love on things are earth, on things that may get stolen or fall apart, or we can have our focus, our joy, and our love, in heaven, by doing things to serve God. Help us to learn the importance of giving up things in order to give out the things that are important to you like encouraging others.

Prayer: Dear God, we want our hearts to be in heaven with You. Help us to concentrate on storing up treasures in heaven by obeying You, helping others, sharing Jesus with our friends, and spending time at church worshipping, learning, working, and serving. Help us to keep our focus on things that are important to You. May the special cards of encouragement that we send out this week be just a small gift to You as we honor you through giving up our time for others. Amen

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Week Four (the First Sunday before Easter) — Remembering Jesus Sacrifice for Us

Reader #1: He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. (Matthew 28:6)

Reader #2: During this next week, we are going to spend time reflecting on the ultimate sacrifice that God gave us... His Son, Jesus Christ. The resurrection proved Jesus was the Messiah: The resurrection of Jesus proved that the claims He made were true – He was the promised Messiah! The resurrection demonstrated Christ's power over death: The curse was broken. Jesus conquered death! The resurrection proved Jesus' sacrifice was accepted: God accepted the sacrifice of Christ's death on our behalf. Jesus took the punishment we deserved.

Prayer: Loving God, help us to slow down this week to take in the full impact of this sacrifice that You made possible for each of us. May we see it in a whole new way. Let each of us respond in light of the new insights and walk with you in newness of life. Amen.

Week Five — Easter Sunday

The Resurrection Cross is replaced by an Easter Lily

RESPONSIVE READING

Leader: Jesus came to us a little child, flesh and blood to share in our humanity
For God so loved the world **ALL: That all might have eternal life**

Leader: Jesus came to us as carpenter and yet in whose creative hands a world was fashioned
For God so loved the world **ALL: That all might have eternal life**

Leader: Jesus came to us as fisherman and yet pointed to a harvest that was yet to come
For God so loved the world **ALL: That all might have eternal life**

Leader: Jesus came to us as teacher and opened eyes to truths that only the poor could understand
For God so loved the world **ALL: That all might have eternal life**

Leader: Jesus came to us as healer and opened hearts to the reality of wholeness
For God so loved the world **ALL: That all might have eternal life**

Leader: Jesus came to us as prophet, priest and king and yet humbled himself to take our place upon the cross
For God so loved the world **ALL: That all might have eternal life**

Leader: Jesus came to us as servant and revealed to us the extent of his Father's love for human kind
For God so loved the world **ALL: That all might have eternal life**

Leader: Jesus endured public shame and disgrace but rose from the a sinner's death to the triumph of a Savior's
resurrection
For God so loved the world **ALL: That all might have eternal life**

**ALL: God so loved the world that he gave his only Son for the sake of me and other sinners too
God so loved the world**

Thank You, Lord Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer. AMEN