

# Why Easter

5 - day Easter Reading Plan

Nicky  
Gumbel



## DAY 1 DEVOTIONAL

### **Why do we need Jesus?**

You and I were created to live in a relationship with God. Until we find that relationship, there will always be something missing in our lives. As a result, we are often aware of a gap. One rock singer described it by saying: 'I've got an emptiness deep inside.'

A woman, in a letter to me, wrote of a 'deep deep void.' Another young girl spoke of 'a chunk missing in her soul.'

People try to fill this emptiness in various ways. Some try to close the gap with money, but that does not satisfy. Aristotle Onassis, who was one of the richest men in the world, said at the end of his life: 'Millions do not always add up to what a man needs out of life.'

Others try drugs or excess alcohol or sexual promiscuity. One girl said to me, 'These things provide instant gratification but they leave you feeling hollow afterwards.' Still others try hard work, music, sport or seek success. There may not be anything wrong with these in themselves, but they do not satisfy that hunger deep inside every human being.

Even the closest human relationships, wonderful though they are, do not in themselves satisfy this 'emptiness deep inside.' Nothing will fill this gap except the relationship with God for which we were made.

According to the New Testament, the reason for this emptiness is that men and woman have turned their backs on God.

Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life' (John 6:35). He is the only one who can satisfy our deepest hunger because he is the one who makes it possible for our relationship with God to be restored.

**a) He satisfies our hunger for meaning and purpose in life**

*Only in a relationship with our Creator do we find the true meaning and purpose of our lives.*

**b) He satisfies our hunger for life beyond death**

*Most people do not want to die. We long to survive beyond death. Only in Jesus Christ do we find eternal life.*

**c) He satisfies our hunger for forgiveness**

*If we are honest, we would have to admit that we all do things that we know are wrong. By his death on the cross, Jesus made it possible for us to be forgiven and brought back into a relationship with God.*

**DAY 1 SCRIPTURE READING**

**JOHN 6:35**

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

## **DAY 2 DEVOTIONAL**

### **Why did he come, and why did he die?**

Jesus is the only man who has ever chosen to be born, and he is one of the few who has chosen to die. He said that the entire reason for his coming was to die for us. He came ‘to give his life as a ransom for many’ (Mark 10:45).

Jesus said he died ‘for’ us. The word ‘for’ means ‘instead of.’ He did it because he loved us and did not want us to have to pay the penalty for all the things that we had done wrong. On the cross, he was effectively saying, ‘I will take all those things on myself.’ He did it for you, and he did it for me. If you or I had been the only person in the world, he would have done it for us. St. Paul wrote of ‘the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me’ (Galatians 2:20). It was out of love for us that he gave his life as a ransom.

The word ‘ransom’ comes from the slave market. A kind person might buy a slave and set him free—but first the ransom price had to be paid. Jesus paid, by his blood on the cross, the ransom price to set us free.

## **DAY 2 SCRIPTURE READING**

### **MARK 10:45**

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

### **GALATIANS 2:20**

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

## **DAY 3 DEVOTIONAL**

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## **DAY 3 DEVOTIONAL**

### **Freedom from what?**

Jesus paid, by his blood on the cross, the ransom price to set us free.

### **Freedom from guilt**

Whether we feel guilty or not, we are all guilty before God because of the many times we have broken his laws in thought, word and deed. Just as when someone commits a crime there is a penalty to be paid, in the same way there is a penalty for breaking God's law. 'The wages of sin is death' (Romans 6:23).

The result of the things we do wrong is spiritual death—being cut off from God eternally. We all deserve to suffer that penalty. On the cross, Jesus took the penalty in our place so that we could be totally forgiven and our guilt could be taken away.

### **Freedom from addiction**

Jesus said that 'everyone who sins is a slave to sin' (John 8:34). Jesus died to set us free from that slavery. On the cross, the power of this addiction was broken. Although we may still fall from time to time, the power of this addiction is broken when Jesus sets us free.

### **Freedom from fear**

Jesus came so that 'by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death' (Hebrews 2:14-15). We need no longer fear death.

Death is not the end for those whom Jesus has set free. Rather it is the gateway to heaven, where we will be free from even the presence of sin. When Jesus set us free from the fear of death, he also set us free from all other fears.

## **DAY 3 SCRIPTURE READING**

### **ROMANS 6:23**

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **JOHN 8:34, 36**

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

### **HEBREWS 2:14-15**

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death, he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

## DAY 4 DEVOTIONAL

### Freedom for what?

Jesus is no longer physically on earth, but he has not left us alone. He sent his Holy Spirit to be with us. When his Spirit comes to live within us, he gives us a new freedom.

### Freedom to know God

The things which we do wrong cause a barrier between us and God: 'your iniquities have separated you from your God' (Isaiah 59:2). When Jesus died on the cross, he removed the barrier that existed between us and God. As a result, he has made it possible for us to have a relationship with our Creator. We become his sons and daughters. The Spirit assures us of this relationship, and he helps us to get to know God better. He helps us to pray and to understand God's word (the Bible).

### Freedom to love

'We love because he first loved us' (1 John 4:19). As we look at the cross, we understand God's love for us. When the Spirit of God comes to live within us, we experience that love. As we do so, we receive a new love for God and for other people. We are set free to live a life of love—a life centered around loving and serving Jesus **and loving and serving other people rather than a life centered around ourselves.**

### Freedom to change

People sometimes say, 'You are what you are. You can't change.' The good news is that with the help of the Spirit, we can change. The Holy Spirit gives us the freedom to live the sort of lives that deep down we have always wanted to live. St. Paul tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control' (Galatians 5:22-23). When we ask the Spirit of God to come and live within us, these wonderful characteristics begin to grow in our lives.

## DAY 4 SCRIPTURE READING

### ISAIAH 59:2

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

**1 JOHN 4:19**

We love because he first loved us.

**GALATIANS 5:22-23**

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.



## DAY 5 DEVOTIONAL

### What do we have to do?

The New Testament makes it clear that we have to do something to accept the gift that God offers. This is an act of faith. John writes that '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).

Believing involves an act of faith, based on all that we know about Jesus. It is not blind faith. It is putting our trust in a Person. In some ways, it is like the step of faith taken by a bride or a bridegroom when they say, 'I will' on their wedding day.

The way people take this step of faith varies enormously, but I want to describe one way in which you can take **this step of faith right now. Three very simple words can summarise it:**

#### **'Sorry'**

You have to ask God to forgive you for all the things you have done wrong and turn from everything which you know is wrong in your life. This is what the Bible means by 'repentance.'

#### **'Thank you'**

We believe that Jesus died for us on the cross. You need to thank him for dying for you and for the offer of his free gift of forgiveness, freedom and his Spirit.

#### **'Please'**

God never forces his way into our lives. You need to accept his gift and invite him to come and live within you by his Spirit.

If you would like to have a relationship with God and you are ready to say these three things, then here is a very simple prayer which you can pray and which will be the start of that relationship:

*Lord Jesus Christ,*

*I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life (take a few moments to ask his forgiveness for anything particular that is on your conscience). Please forgive me. I now turn from everything which I know is wrong.*

*Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free.*

*Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your Spirit. I now receive that gift.*

*Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever.*

*Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen.*

## **DAY 5 SCRIPTURE READING**

### **JOHN 3:16**

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.