

Day 1

The Triumphal Entry

By: Maggie Bertram

Jesus and His disciples were approaching Jerusalem, but this wasn't just any road trip. Jesus was entering Jerusalem to fulfill God's plan for the world to be saved. Once the group got close to Jerusalem, Jesus sent two of His disciples into a village. He told them that they would find a donkey and a colt tied there. They were instructed to untie them and bring them to Jesus. If anyone stopped and questioned the disciples, they were to say that the Lord needed the donkeys.

The disciples did just as Jesus asked them. This fulfilled a prophecy we read in the Old Testament, where the prophet Zechariah shared that Jesus would come riding on a donkey. A prophecy is a special message from God that tells people what will happen in the future. Once the colt was brought to Jesus, the disciples laid their cloaks on its back, and Jesus rode on the colt and continued His journey into Jerusalem. A large crowd gathered. Some people laid their clothes on the ground for the donkey to walk on. Others cut large leaves off trees and spread them on the ground as Jesus rode by.

This was something people did to welcome kings into their cities. The crowd joyfully exclaimed "Hosanna!" and announced Jesus' arrival! The whole city was noisy! Some people were celebrating, and others were asking who Jesus was. The Pharisees did not like what was happening, they told Jesus to silence His followers. But Jesus explained that "If they were to keep silent, the stones would cry out!"

Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; Matthew 21:1-11; Zechariah 9:9

The Point: Jesus is God's plan to save us.

Devotional: It's a Party

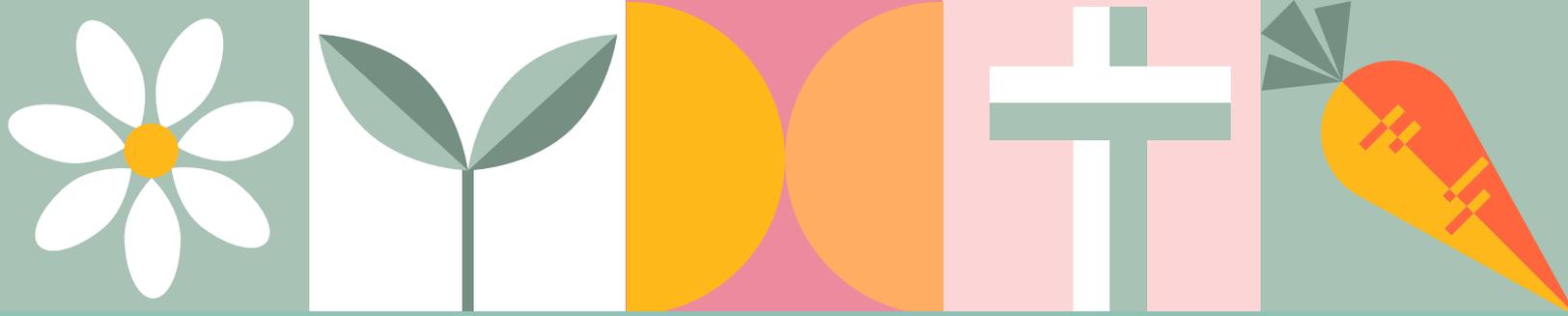
Wow! What an entrance! People were gathered in the streets, the disciples were following alongside Jesus, the crowds were laying down clothes and cutting off tree branches. The crowd was cheering and shouting "Hosanna!" It was a party! And then came Jesus, riding on...a donkey. What might you expect a king to ride? Probably something amazing and powerful, like maybe an elephant or a tiger or at least a horse. While it might seem surprising that Jesus chose to ride into town on a donkey, there's no need to be surprised. This is what God had planned from the very beginning, as we see in Zechariah 9:9. We can always trust God's plan, because He knows best. Zechariah describes the Messiah as "righteous," "victorious," and "humble." The people expected a powerful king who would save them from their enemies, but Jesus is so much more than just a king. He came to save us from our sins! He is our Savior!

Discuss

1. How would you feel if Jesus came to your town? What would you do to celebrate?
2. How can you celebrate Jesus in your every day life?

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, Thank You for being a different kind of King! You are the Messiah and our Savior. Thank You for following God's plan to save us. Amen.



Day 2

The Last Supper

By: Rachel Riquelme

Every year, Jewish people came together to celebrate and remember God through the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover. They praised God for how He protected His people from judgment and death as they celebrated and remembered that first Passover night in Egypt.

Jesus gathered with His followers, the disciples, to celebrate the Passover. As they were sitting at the table, Jesus said one of the disciples would betray Him. As they were eating, Jesus took the bread, gave thanks to God, and broke it. He gave it to His disciples and said, "Take and eat it; this is my body." Then Jesus took the cup, gave thanks to God, and gave it to His disciples. He said, "Drink from it, all of you." He told the disciples that His blood was a new covenant or promise, and it would be shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 26:17-30; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

The Point: Jesus is our Rescuer, the Messiah.

Devotional: New and Better

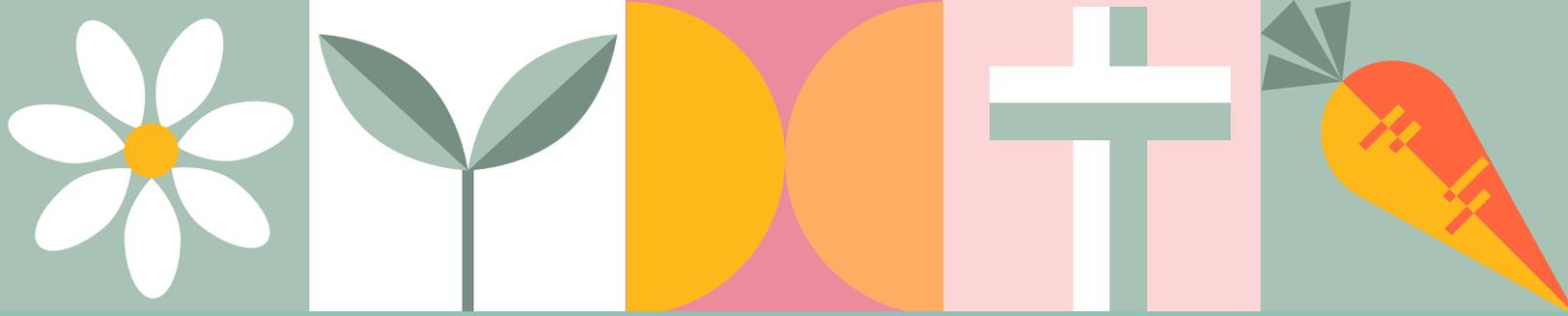
Have you ever wanted something new and better than what you already have? Maybe you saw an advertisement or played with a new toy or game at a friend's house. After you saw this new and better thing, what you already had just did not seem to be enough. Throughout the Old Testament, we read about the covenant, or promise, God made with His people. He gave them laws to follow, and if they obeyed them, God promised to protect and bless them. The people continually disobeyed God. However, God promised that one day He would send a Rescuer, the Messiah, who would make a way for people to return to God and have a forever relationship with Him. Jesus is the Messiah, the Rescuer God promised to send. Hebrews 8:6 tells us that Jesus has given us a better covenant. Through His death and resurrection, He has made a way for each of us to have forgiveness and a relationship with God.

Discuss

1. What do you think it means to have a relationship with God?
2. Jesus is sharing this important moment with His close friends, the disciples. Do you have a close friend you can share this important news with?

Prayer:

God, Thank You for Jesus. Thank You that He is the new and better covenant. Thank You that He died on the cross so that we can be forgiven and have a way back to You. Amen.



Day 3

Jesus Prayed in the Garden

By: Kimba Campbell

In a garden named Gethsemane, Jesus told His disciples to wait while He went apart from them and prayed. He took Peter, James, and John further into the garden with Him. As Jesus prayed, He was suffering and troubled. He asked Peter, James, and John to wait while He went further into the garden. “Stay awake with Me,” Jesus told them.

Jesus fell to the ground. He prayed, asking God to take away the hard things He must do. Jesus said, “Father, Take this hard time away from Me. But don’t do what I want. Do what You want.”

Jesus went back to the disciples and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, “Are you asleep? Could you not stay awake for one hour?” Jesus said, “Pray that you will not give in to temptation.” Again, Jesus went away and prayed.

Jesus came back to His disciples and found them sleeping a second time. He went away a third time and prayed alone. When He came to His disciples, they were asleep yet again. Jesus said, “See, the time is near.” Soon, Judas arrived with soldiers who arrested Jesus!

Matthew 26:36-50

The Point: We can trust in God’s plan even when things are scary or difficult. God is always with us.

Devotional: Trusting God

One night, Jesus went to a garden called Gethsemane to pray. He knew something very hard was about to happen—He would go to the cross to save us from sin. Even though Jesus was sad, He talked to God about it.

Jesus prayed, “Not as I will, but as You will.” This means Jesus told God, “I want what You want even if it is hard.” Jesus showed us what it means to trust God’s plan even when it is not easy.

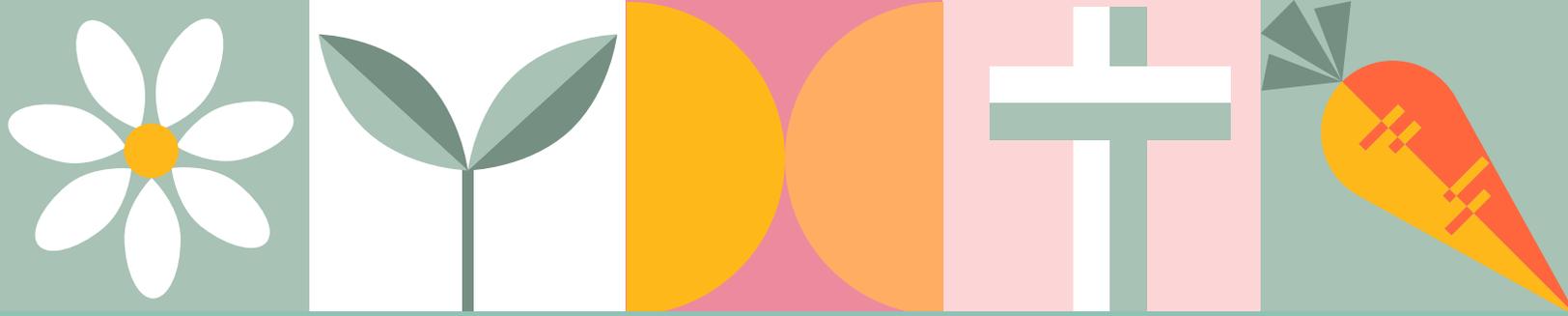
How do you think Jesus felt in the garden? How do you feel when something hard or scary happens? When we face something scary or difficult, we can follow Jesus’ example and pray. We can tell God how we feel, just like Jesus did. We also can ask God to help us trust Him, because His plan is always good.

Discuss

1. How can you show faith in Jesus even in tough times?
2. Jesus commanded His disciples to pray with Him in this challenging time. What does your prayer life look like?

Prayer:

Dear God, Thank You for loving us so much that You sent Jesus to help us. When things are hard or scary, help us to remember Jesus’ prayer in the garden. Teach us to trust You even when we are afraid. Amen.



Day 4

Peter Denied Jesus

By: Land ryHolmes

After Jesus had been betrayed by Judas and arrested, Jesus was taken away. Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, followed them but stayed some distance away. A servant looked closely at Peter, she said, "This man was with him too." But he denied it: "Woman, I don't know him."

After a little while, someone else saw him and said, "You're one of them too." Peter was afraid for the people to find out He was one of Jesus' disciples. Peter said, "I am not!"

About an hour later, another kept saying, "This man was certainly with him." But Peter said, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about! "

Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. Then the Lord turned and looked at Peter. So Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Luke 22:54-62

The Point: Jesus expects us to follow Him always.

Devotional: Always Follow Jesus

The story of Peter denying Jesus is found in all four Gospels, which seems to indicate that God wants us to learn something from Peter's story. It is hard to understand how Peter could deny following Jesus, especially since he didn't deny following Jesus only once or twice, but three times.

Jesus warned Peter what was going to happen, but Peter claimed he would never deny knowing Jesus. After all, Peter left his job as a fisherman and traveled with Jesus for three years. Peter watched Jesus do many miracles and listened to Jesus' teachings as they traveled from town to town. Peter was one of Jesus' closest friends.

Nonetheless after Jesus was arrested, Peter was afraid. So Peter said he did not know Jesus. After Peter denied Jesus the third time, he heard the rooster crow, just as Jesus told Peter it would. Jesus turned and looked at Peter. Realizing what he had done, Peter left and cried. Many years ago, I was in elementary

school when another kid asked if I was a "Jesus freak." Before I tell you how I responded, there are a few things you should know. First, I considered the classmate to be a bully, and I already felt uncomfortable before he asked the question. Second, my definition of a "freak" was someone who was weird. I went to church a lot, and I had become a Christian three years earlier. But I didn't think I was weird, so I answered, "No." After talking to my mother later, I realized the bully

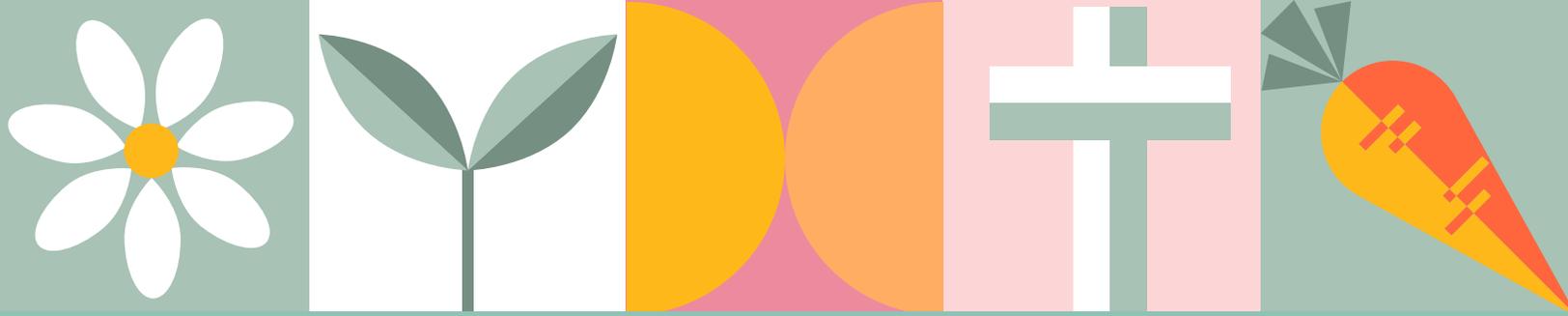
probably thought being a Christian was the same as being a "Jesus freak." I've thought about my response many times since then. I wish I could go back in time and tell the other kid I wasn't a "freak" but that I did believe in and follow Jesus. As a teenager and later as an adult, I compared my childhood experience to Peter's. Peter loved Jesus and had followed Him for three years. But Peter was afraid, so he told the bullies he didn't know Jesus.

Discuss

1. Do other people know that you love and follow Jesus? Do they make fun of you for going to church? Do they tease you when you make right choices that please Jesus?
2. How can you follow Jesus even when others may think that being a Christian is weird?

Prayer:

Jesus, Thank You for loving me even when I don't want people to make fun of me for being a Christian. Help me show people that I love You and want to follow You, always. Amen.



Day 5

Jesus' Arrest and Trial

By: Landon Tucker

Jesus prayed in the garden after sharing a meal with His disciples. After Jesus finished praying and was speaking to His disciples, a mob with swords and clubs from the chief priests, scribes, and elders arrived, led by a former disciple named Judas. They arrested Jesus. His disciples were upset, but Jesus told them this was meant to happen so prophecy could be fulfilled.

Jesus was taken to a high priest named Caiaphas, but he had Jesus tied up and led away to Pilate, the Roman governor. Each year during the Passover festival, one prisoner would be released. Pilate gave the crowd a choice. He could release Jesus, or he could release a thief and murderer name Barabbas. The crowd chose to set Barabbas free and shouted for Jesus to be crucified. Jesus was led away and made fun of as the soldiers stripped off His clothes and dressed Him in a scarlet robe, putting a crown of thorns on His head. They beat Jesus and spit on Him before leading him to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull) where He would be crucified.

Matthew 26:47-57; 27:1-31

The Point: Jesus died for the sins of the world.

Devotional: Forgiving Others Because Jesus Forgives Me

Has a friend ever done anything mean to you? A harder question to answer might be—have you ever done anything mean to a friend? We've all been hurt before, and we've all said or done things that we regret. Mistakes happen to everybody. But what if you had a friend that knew you would someday do something mean to them and they still chose to be your friend anyway? That would be a great friend!

Jesus is that kind of friend! He chose to die on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. He knew before you were even born that you would sin against Him, but He still created you and loves you. Jesus knew before you even took your first breath that He would have to die on the cross for your sins, but He loves you so much that He still did it!

Because Jesus makes forgiveness available to us, we can forgive others when they are mean to us. We also can ask others for forgiveness when we do something wrong to them.

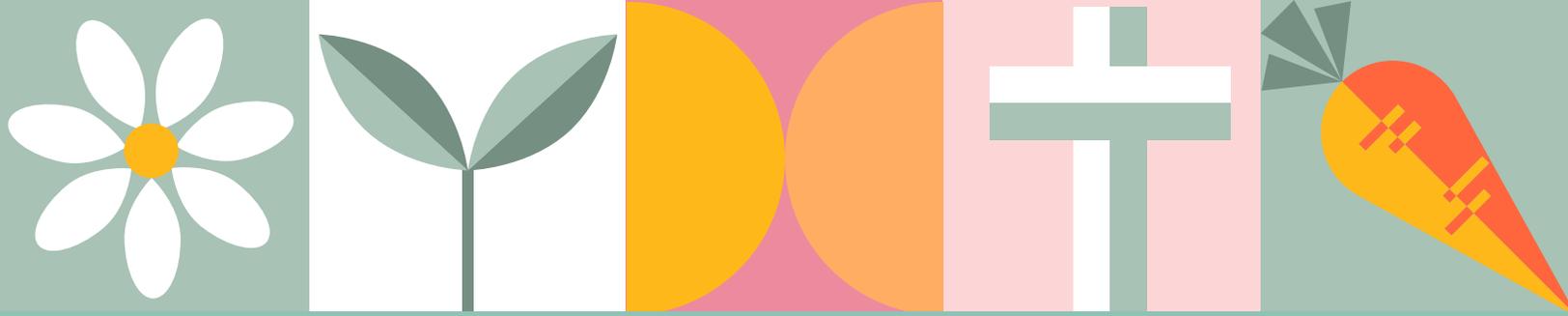
Jesus' love, which was shown on the cross, helps us every day of our lives, because we can remember how good He is and treat others the way He treats us.

Discuss

1. Do we deserve to be forgiven by Jesus? (No). Why did He choose to forgive us?
2. Is there someone you need forgiveness from? Is there someone you need to forgive?

Prayer:

Jesus, Thank You for loving us enough to die for us. Thank You for making it possible for our sins to be forgiven. Help us show Your love to others by asking for and offering forgiveness when needed. Amen.



Day 6

Jesus' Crucifixion

By: Aaron Wilson

Following Jesus' unjust trial, Roman soldiers led Him to Golgotha to be crucified along a highway where passersby would see and ridicule Him. Above Jesus on the cross a sign was placed that mockingly said, "King of the Jews." Below Jesus' feet, soldiers cast lots for His clothing, and to His left and right hung criminals also being crucified.

Just before giving up His spirit, Jesus quoted David's words from Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" He then declared, "It is finished!" As this last gasp left Jesus' lungs, it ushered in a string of miraculous events—each one indicating that Scripture's redemptive story had now reached its crescendo.

The sky darkened, an earthquake split rocks in two, the temple curtain was torn from top to bottom, and tombs opened with the dead coming back to life and walking into the city. Witnessing these events, the Roman centurion guarding Jesus drew one conclusion: "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Mark 15:20-39

The Point: Jesus died to pay the penalty for my sins.

Devotional: The Suffering Savior

The centurion recognized Jesus' identity as the Son of God because of what he saw with his eyes. But perhaps unknown to the centurion, extremely important invisible realities had just taken place.

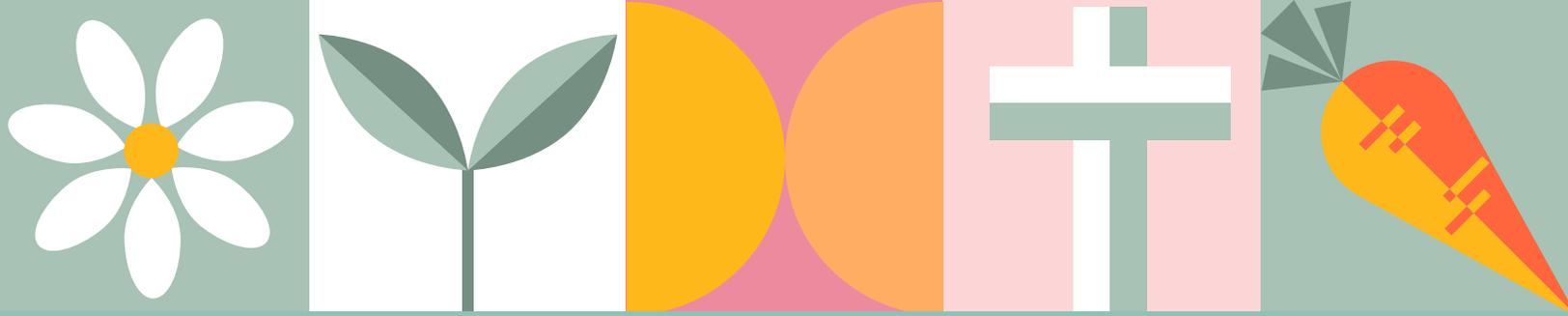
During those agonizing hours, Jesus took on the full weight of the sin of humanity. Jesus—who never did anything wrong—took on our sins and the curse that came with them. The wrath of God was poured out on Jesus, the Son of God, so that the people of God could be declared righteous in His sight. As you celebrate Good Friday, focus on the fact that Jesus endured the cross not only for His glory, but also for our good. (See Hebrews 12:2.)

Discuss

1. You are declared RIGHTEOUS because of what Jesus has done. What does that mean to you?
2. Do you believe that what Jesus did on the cross is enough to cover ALL of your sin- past, present, and future?

Prayer:

Jesus, Thank You for suffering in my place to take away my sin and give me Your righteousness. Thank You for loving me to the point of death to bring me into Your kingdom and Your family. Amen.



Day 7

Jesus' Burial

By: Shelly Harris

After Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for our sin, one of His followers, Joseph of Arimathea, went to see Pilate. Joseph asked for permission to bury Jesus' body, and Pilate agreed. Nicodemus, who had asked Jesus questions earlier in his ministry, brought myrrh and aloes to help Joseph. The two men took Jesus' body, and they wrapped it in clean, linen clothes and fragrant spices. They followed the Jewish customs of how to honor someone who had died. Joseph and Nicodemus placed Jesus' body in a new tomb in the garden. Then a large stone was rolled over the entrance to the tomb.

Matthew 27:57–61; John 19:38–42

The Point: Even when we face uncertainty, we can honor God.

Devotional: Obey and Honor God

Jesus told His followers that He would die and be brought back to life, but His followers didn't quite understand God's plan. Jesus' followers watched Him die on the cross. Then some of them hid, afraid that the Roman soldiers would look for Jesus' disciples. Others, like Joseph of Arimathea, decided to do what they knew would honor God. They respectfully buried Jesus' body.

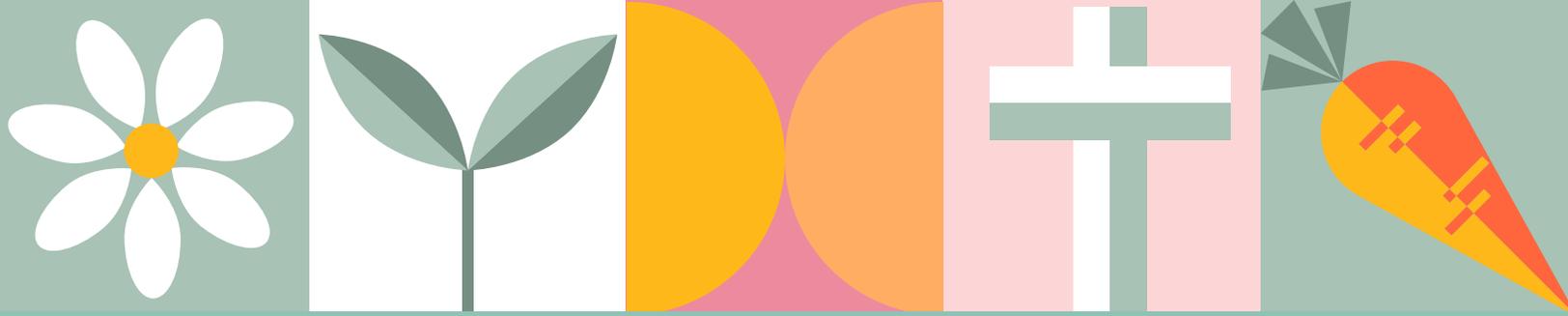
Life can be confusing and sad at times. We don't always understand God's plan for our lives or the lives of those we love. When we face these moments, we can look for ways to obey God and honor Him.

Discuss

1. What is one way you can faithfully obey God this week?
2. God can't lie, so we can trust every single promise He makes. Where can you go to find the promises of God?

Prayer:

Lord, Help us to seek You when we face uncertainty in our daily lives.
May we seek to honor You by obeying You even when we do not understand
Your plan. Amen.



Day 8

The Resurrection

By: Emily Jennings

When the Sabbath ended, three women—Mary Magdalene, another Mary, and Salome—bought spices to prepare Jesus’ body for burial. The next morning at sunrise, the women went to Jesus’ tomb. On the way, they asked one another, “Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?”

When they arrived, the women saw that the very large stone had been rolled away from the tomb’s entrance. The women went inside and saw a young man in a white robe, sitting to the right. They were alarmed! The young man said, “Don’t be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they put Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see Him there just as He told you.’”

The women ran out of the tomb trembling and astonished. They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.

Mark 16:1-8

The Point: Your greatest enemy is defeated!

Devotional: He’s Not Here!

You walk into class, excited to see your best friend, but she isn’t there. You’re It for hide-and-seek, but you can’t find anyone. You go to your favorite team’s game, but the star player is injured. It’s bad news when someone you hoped to see isn’t there.

Three women went to Jesus’ tomb to take care of His body. When they learned that Jesus wasn’t there, they were afraid! Dead people don’t leave their tombs. However, before His death, Jesus told His disciples that He *would* leave His tomb—alive.

When you need Jesus, no matter when or where, you can pray or read God’s Word. It’s comforting to know He’s always there. But, on the morning when Jesus’ followers went to find Him, it was good news—the best news—that He *wasn’t* there! Because Jesus wasn’t there, death, your greatest enemy, has been defeated.

Discuss

1. Have you decided to follow Jesus?
2. How would you share the good news of Jesus with someone else if they asked?

Prayer:

Dear God, Thank You that Jesus was not in the tomb when the women came. Thank You for sending Jesus to defeat death for me. Remind me that Jesus’ resurrection is the best news in the world, today and every day. Amen.