

FAMILY EASTER DEVOTIONS



**BEST SURPRISE
EVER**

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Best Surprise Ever

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INTRODUCTION

We all love fun surprises, don't we? About 2,000 years ago, God gave us the biggest and best surprise of all time. Jesus is alive!

Even though Jesus had been telling his friends he would rise again, no one saw it coming. Yet, when they discovered the empty tomb on Easter morning, they realized God had given them the greatest surprise of all time.

This Easter, help your family rediscover the wonder of the resurrection story by carving out a few minutes each day to walk through the devotions in this book.

Snuggle up together, jump into the Bible and get ready to be surprised by God's power and grace this Easter season.

JESUS IS ALIVE!



And what is eternal life? It is knowing you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

John 17:3 (NIRV)

Big Idea: Getting to know Jesus will change your life.

Life is full of surprises, isn't it? Can you remember the last time you were surprised? Was it a good surprise like a cookie in your lunchbox or was it a bad surprise, like a surprise test at school?

Some surprises are bigger than others. A friend stopping by your house to play might be fun, but a friend inviting you to go to Disney with them would be absolutely amazing.

In the history of surprises, however, there is one surprise that is the biggest and best surprise of all time. It is the reason we celebrate Easter and the reason we can celebrate every day of the year.

That surprise is that Jesus is alive. He was alive on that first Easter morning 2,000 years ago, and he is still alive today.

Jesus showed us once and for all that he is the Son of God. He

showed us that he is stronger than evil, more powerful than death and bigger than anything we could ever fear.

Best of all, Jesus made a way for us to be alive too. Forever. And that wonderful life with God begins here and now.

Over the next six chapters we are going to look at the best surprise ever and discover many other surprising things about Jesus along the way. Get ready, because when you take a good look at Jesus, it will change your life.

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for the best surprise ever. Please help me to get to know you better and get me ready to celebrate Easter with you. Amen.

Talk About It

- When was the last time you had a fun surprise?
- What's the best surprise you can remember?
- How do you think Jesus' friends felt when they found out he was alive?
- How do you get to know your friends better? How could you get to know Jesus better?

SURPRISING COURAGE



No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. – John
10:18a (NLT)

Big Idea: Jesus is courageous and can help me to be courageous too.

What's the bravest thing you've ever done? Maybe you stood up to a bully or stayed in your bed even though you were scared of the dark. It could be the time you told the truth even though you knew you would get in trouble. Or the day you chose to do the right thing when everyone around you was doing what was wrong.

Being courageous isn't easy. Sometimes it means doing hard things or scary things even when we don't want to.

Jesus had to decide once if he was going to be courageous. His Father had sent Him to earth to save the world, but there was only one way to do it. He would have to die in our place. See, everyone on earth had done wrong things, and those wrong things kept us from being friends with God.

The only way to save us was for someone to take the punish-

ment for the bad things we've done, someone who had never done anything bad himself. Jesus was the only person qualified to do the job. He was the only sinless human ever, and he is the Son of God.

Jesus knew if he went through with God's plan, he would be beaten, nailed to a cross and, worst of all, be separated from his Father for the first time ever.

Jesus had a big decision to make. He went to a garden to pray and talk to his Father about it. He said, "My Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering away from me. But let what you want be done, not what I want" (Matthew 26:39 NIV).

That was a courageous prayer. Jesus asked God three times if there was another way to save the world, and three times he told his Father that he would do whatever God wanted him to do.

There was no other way, so Jesus did the courageous thing. He obeyed his Father and carried out his plan. He died on the cross for you and me. He took the punishment for every wrong thing we would ever do so that we can be forgiven and be friends with God forever.

Jesus' courageous choice saved the world.

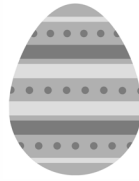
Prayer

God, thank you for sending Jesus. Thank you that he made the courageous choice to die for me. Please help me to have the courage to do hard things too. Amen.

Talk About It

- How do you think Jesus felt when he was praying in the garden?
- When has it been hard for you to do the right thing?
- How can we follow Jesus' example when we have a tough choice to make?

SURPRISING POWER



So God lifted him up to the highest place. God gave him the name that is above every name.

Phil 2:9 (NIRV)

Big Idea: Jesus is all-powerful and always in control.

What if you had a secret identity that no one else knew about? Like maybe you were a ninja or a superhero or secret agent, but you just went to school and hung out with regular kids and nobody knew the truth.

Then imagine if a kid started picking on you or even started a fight. Boy, would they be in for a big surprise! They would have no idea who they were messing with until it was too late.

The same thing happened to the group of Roman soldiers sent to arrest Jesus. They had no idea who they were messing with. They thought they were just going out to arrest some teacher their bosses didn't like, but when they arrived in the garden, they found someone very different.

Jesus knew the soldiers were coming. It was all part of God's

plan to save the world. When Jesus saw them approaching the garden, he didn't run or hide. He went out to meet them.

Here's what the Bible says happened next:

“Who are you looking for?” he asked.

‘Jesus the Nazarene,’ they replied.

‘I am he,’ Jesus said . . . As Jesus said ‘I am he,’ they all drew back and fell to the ground” (John 18:4-5, NLT).

Why did a group of big, tough soldiers fall to the ground? Because of Jesus' power. Jesus spoke with such strength and authority, these battle-hardened warriors collapsed like a bunch of wet noodles. They knew they were in the presence of someone awesome.

Yet, Jesus let them arrest him anyway. At any moment he could break free or call down an army of angels to take these guys out, but he didn't. He chose to follow God's plan to save the world.

Jesus' friends, however, got scared and ran away. They forgot that Jesus is all-powerful and that he is still in control even when bad things happen.

Sometimes bad things happen to you and me too.

Sometimes we may hear about scary things going on in the world. But that's when we need to remember that Jesus is bigger and stronger than any bad thing. He made the universe. He is the King over everything, and he loves us and will help us no matter what we face.

Prayer

Jesus, you are all-powerful. There is no one bigger or stronger than you. Help me to remember you are in control even when scary things happen that I don't understand. Amen.

Talk About It

- How do you think the soldiers felt when they first met Jesus?

- What are some thing that scare you right now?
- How can you remind yourself of Jesus' power when you're worried or afraid?

SURPRISING FORGIVENESS



Lord, you are forgiving and good. You are full of love for all who call out to you.

Psalm 86:5 (NIRV)

Big Idea: Jesus is loving and forgives me when I blow it.

Have you ever had a friend turn their back on you when you needed them most? Maybe you were having a tough day at school, and they didn't have time to talk to you, or maybe you needed help with a math problem, and they refused. Maybe someone was picking on you, and instead of standing up for you, they joined in and made fun of you too. If that's ever happened to you, then you know a little bit about how Jesus felt the night he was arrested.

When the soldiers came after Jesus, all of his friends ran away, even Peter, one of his best friends in the world. Peter had promised that he would never leave Jesus. He said he would stand by his side even if everyone else deserted him.

But Peter was wrong. He didn't just run away. Peter lied and told

people he didn't even know Jesus. Can you imagine that? What if you got in trouble at school and your best friend told the teacher he wasn't your friend just to keep himself out of trouble?

Would you want to hang out with a person like that? Probably not. But Jesus did. Jesus loved Peter no matter what, and he knew exactly what Peter was going to do. Jesus told Peter, "I tell you, Peter, you will say three times that you don't know me. And you will do it before the rooster crows today" (Luke 22:34NIrV).

A few verses earlier, however, Jesus told Peter he had already prayed for him and that his story wasn't over. Jesus said, "When you have turned back, help your brothers to be strong" (Luke 22:32 NIrV).

Jesus didn't just predict Peter's failure. He also predicted Peter's forgiveness. He told Peter that after he blew it, he would come back to God, and Jesus would give him an important job.

Think about that. It would be tough to pray for a friend and encourage them knowing they were going to turn their back on you. It would be even tougher to forgive them. But Jesus did it anyway. He did it for Peter, and he did it for us.

Jesus loves us no matter what we do. He loves us just as much on the days we make mistakes as he does on the days we get things right. His forgiveness sets us free to start over again and again and again.

Prayer

Jesus, you know my sin. You know everything wrong I've ever done and ever will do. Thank you for loving me anyway and dying for that sin so I can be forgiven and free. Amen.

Talk About It

- What do you think Jesus was thinking when Peter said he would never leave him?

- Have you ever had a friend disappoint you? Did you forgive them or did it mess up your friendship?
- Have you ever disappointed a friend? How did they treat you?
- How does it make feel knowing that Jesus will forgive you and help you to start over no matter what?

SURPRISING KINGDOM



May your kingdom come. May what you want to happen be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

Matthew 6:10 (NIRV)

Big Idea: Jesus is the King of Kings, and I can help bring his kingdom to earth.

Have you ever built a sand castle? It's a blast to sit on the beach and sculpt your own little kingdom, isn't it? You can shape the walls and towers and turrets any way you want. At the end of the day, though, what happens to your kingdom?

It all gets washed away.

Jesus knew that the same thing happens with all the kingdoms of earth. Countries change names, and get taken over by other countries. Rulers come and go. But there is one kingdom that never ends. God's kingdom!

That's what Jesus was talking about when he was taken to a man named Pontius Pilate. Pilate was a ruler for the Roman government. After Jesus was arrested, his enemies took him to Pilate because they wanted Pilate to put him to death.

Pilate asked Jesus if he was king of the Jewish people. Jesus said he was, but his kingdom wasn't a kingdom on earth. It was better. It was a kingdom in heaven. Pilate didn't understand what he was talking about. He was too busy trying to keep his job and make all the people happy.

Eventually Pilate gave the people what they wanted. He knew Jesus hadn't done anything wrong, but he sentenced him to die on the cross anyway. But here's the amazing part. By dying on the cross, Jesus made it possible for us to be a part of his kingdom, a kingdom that never ends!

Pilate and his kingdom are gone now, washed away like a sandcastle on the beach, but 2,000 years later Jesus' kingdom is still going strong. Someday Jesus will bring his kingdom to earth and will make everything new.

In the meantime, we get to help people see what God's kingdom is like when we treat them the way Jesus would. Every time you love people, serve people and are generous to people, you are bringing heaven to earth a little bit each day.

Prayer

God, thank you for inviting me to be a part of your kingdom. Please help me to show people what your kingdom is like by the way I treat them. Amen.

Talk About It

- What's the difference between human kingdoms and God's kingdom?
- What do you think it will be like when Jesus brings heaven to earth?
- How can you bring a little bit of heaven to earth for someone this week?

SURPRISING PRICE



God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life.

John 3:16 (NIRV)

Big Idea: Jesus died to set me free.

Have you ever tried to sell something you owned? Maybe a baseball card or a comic book or even an old toy at a garage sale? Or maybe you set up a lemonade stand on a hot, summer day and tried to sell drinks to your neighbors?

If you've ever sold something, how did you decide what the price would be? Did you ask your parents to look online to see how much your comic book was worth or ask a friend what they would charge for lemonade?

At the end of the day, though, it doesn't really matter what you charged. What mattered was how much someone was willing to pay. You could have said your baseball card was worth a million dollars, but if no one was willing to pay that price, it wouldn't really be worth it.

2,000 years ago, Jesus showed us how much we are worth to

God. He paid the ultimate price for you and me. He didn't pay for us with money. He paid for us with his life.

After Jesus was arrested and taken to Pilate, he was sentenced to die. He hadn't done anything wrong, but his enemies were jealous of him. They didn't want the people to follow Jesus. They wanted people to follow them.

So Pilate turned Jesus over to the soldiers who beat him and took him to a hill outside of the city. They nailed Jesus to a wooden cross. Then, the one man who had never done anything wrong, the perfect Son of God, took the punishment for the sin of the world.

But this was all part of God's plan. Jesus had come to earth for this very reason. He came to earth to pay the price for the bad things you and I have done, so we don't have to. He died on the cross so we could be forgiven and free.

Now we can be friends with a perfect God even though we're not perfect. Now God's power can change us to be more like Jesus each day. Now we can be a part of God's family because Jesus paid the price for us.

Want to know how much you're worth to God? Just look at the cross. Look at Jesus. Remember the price he paid for you and remember you are loved.

Prayer

Jesus, you are my Savior. Thank you for paying the price for the wrong things I've done so that I can be a part of your family forever. I love you, Jesus. Amen.

Talk About It

- What's the coolest gift you've ever received? Who gave it to you? How did that make you feel?
- What gift did Jesus buy for you on the cross?
- How can we show Jesus we're grateful for his gift this week?

SURPRISING LIFE



The Spirit of the God who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you. So the God who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your bodies. He will do this because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Romans 8:11 (NirV)

Big Idea: Jesus is alive forever, and I can live with him forever too.

Have you ever had bad news turn into good news? Imagine your mom made a fresh batch of cookies, but your brother or sister ate them before you could have any. Bad news, right? But then what if your mom felt sorry for you and made a whole plate of cookies just for you? That's good news.

Or how about this? Imagine you were supposed to go horseback riding, but the trip got rained out. Bad news, right? But then, what if you got up the next day to discover that your grandpa bought you your very own pony? Wow, that would be good news!

Jesus' friends had to deal with some bad news too. It was much worse than someone eating your cookies or a rainy day ruining your plans. Their friend, their leader, their teacher, Jesus, was dead.

Jesus' friends were so incredibly sad. They had been following Jesus for years, watching him do amazing things like walk on water and heal sick people and even bring dead people back to life. They had learned from him and laughed with him. They loved him, but now he was gone.

This wasn't just bad news. It was the worst news ever.

But then, something incredible happened. The worst news of all time turned into the best news of all time.

The Bible says on that first Easter morning, Jesus' body lay dead in a tomb. A massive stone sealed the entrance, and Roman soldiers stood guard outside. Jesus' friends were scared and hiding. All hope seemed lost.

Then God went to work. The ground began to rumble and shake. The soldiers didn't know what was happening. Suddenly, a strange warrior appeared out of nowhere, his clothes crackling with energy, the power and glory of God.

When the soldiers saw the mighty angel, they were terrified and fell to the ground. Then, the angel rolled back the stone that sealed the tomb, and revealed the best surprise ever waiting inside.

Jesus was alive.

The stone wasn't big enough. The guards weren't tough enough and death wasn't strong enough to hold Jesus back. Now Jesus is alive forever, and no one and nothing can ever hurt him again.

You want to know the best part of the best surprise ever? If we follow Jesus, that same power that raised him from the dead is inside of us. So we don't have to be afraid of bad news. We don't even have to be afraid of death, because we will live forever with Jesus.

This Easter, party like you never have before. Thank God for the best surprise ever. Celebrate what Jesus did for you on the cross, that he is alive, and you are alive with him today.

Prayer

God, thank you for the best surprise ever. Thank you that Jesus is

alive, and I will be alive forever with him because of your love and power. Amen.

Talk About It

- What is your favorite part about Easter?
- Can you think of a time you got some bad news? How about good news?
- What makes Jesus' resurrection the best surprise ever?

MORE DEVOTIONS FOR KIDS



The Family Jetpack website is your launchpad for talking about faith at home. We are here to help your family have meaningful spiritual conversations as you do life together.

Whether you're a mom, dad, grandparent, guardian or a wacky aunt, you have spiritual influence with the kids in your life.

At Family Jetpack we want to help you leverage that influence to lead your kids in a growing relationship with Jesus.

Here's what you can expect:

- Weekly family devotions with solid, biblical teaching.
- Fun, monthly themes to get kids excited about God's Word.
- Kid-friendly language that makes it easy to talk about the deep stuff.
- Application for adults to help your entire family grow together.

You have the relationship. We'll give you the words. So fire up your rockets and get ready to fly.

FAMILY DEVOTION PODCAST



If you want fun, family devotions but don't have time to read them, check out the Family Jetpack Podcast on iTunes.

Each week you can listen to another Family Jetpack devotion in the car, around the dinner table or whenever you want to spark up a conversation about God with your kids.

The Family Jetpack Podcast is a great option for families on the go or if you just prefer to listen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Byerly is a dad, husband, writer and Children's Pastor. Jason loves to make a big deal out of Jesus and bring families closer together chasing after him.

Jason has written a book of kids' devotions called God's Big Adventure and a few books for grown-ups called Holiday Road and Tales from the Leaf Pile (though kids seem to like these too).

Jason also loves to help out other Children's Pastors over on his blog and Children's Ministry podcast at SimpleKidmin.com.

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