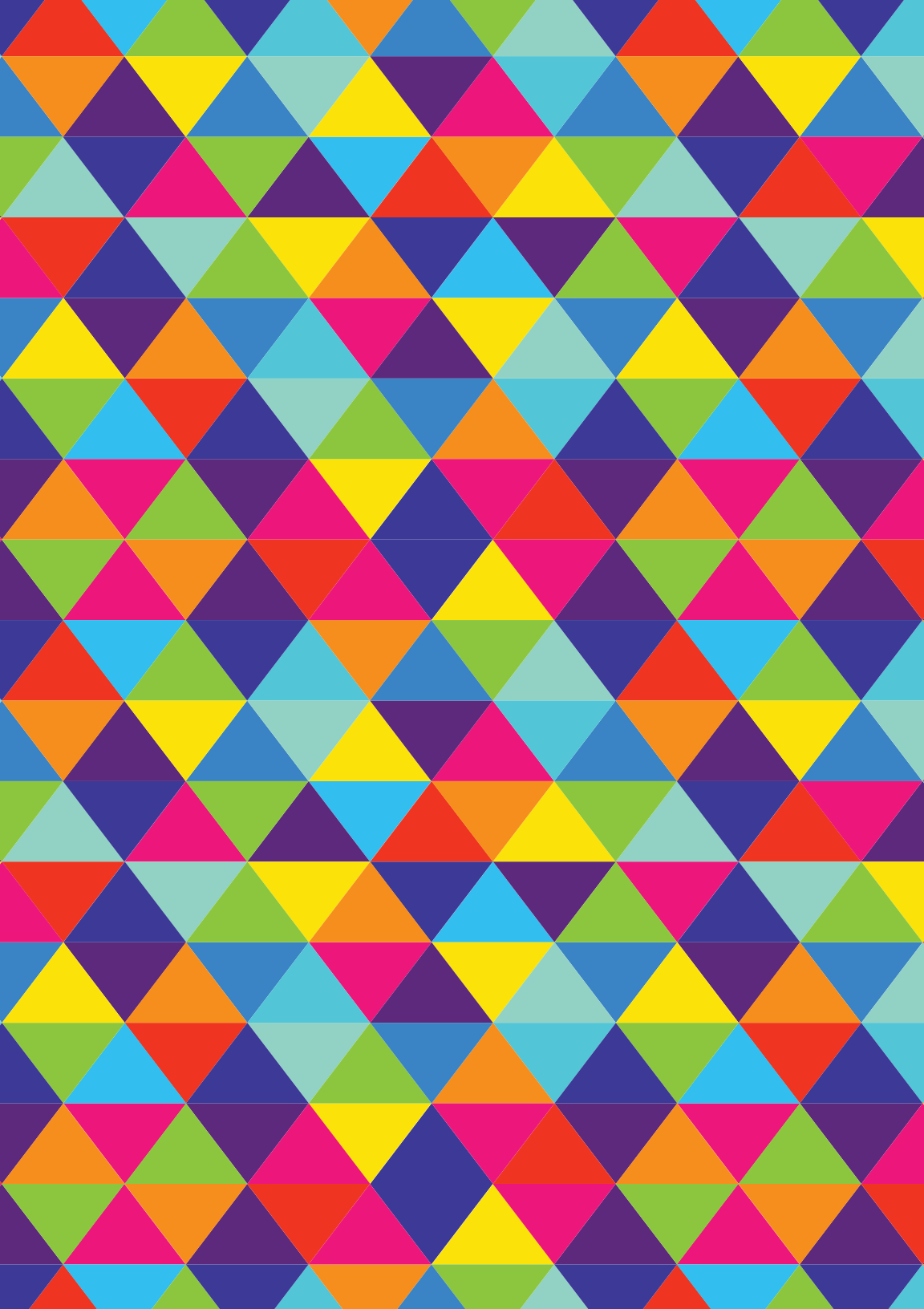




FOLLOWME

OAKWOOD'S EASTER DEVOTIONAL 2017

Brought to you by
Oakwood Family Ministries

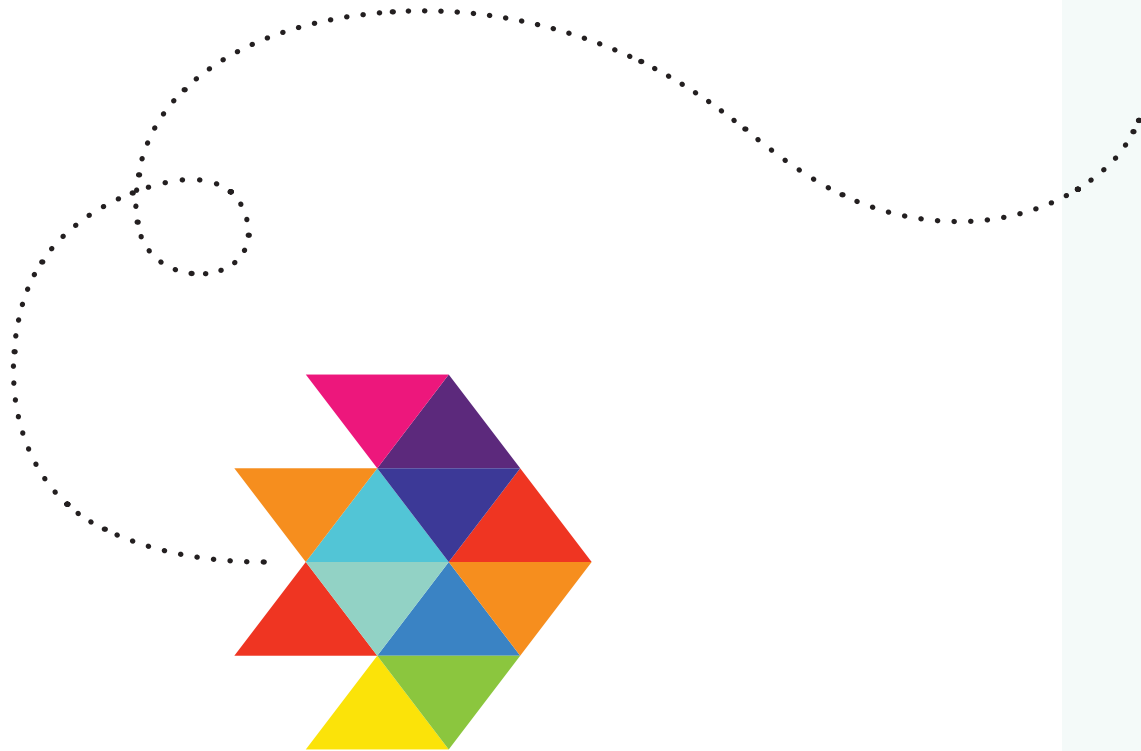


FOLLOWME

EASTER DEVOTIONAL 2017

 **OAKWOOD**

Brought to you by
Oakwood Family Ministries



A Prayer

Holy Father,

You sit enthroned between the cherubim, over the heavens and the earth. The entire universe is subject to You because You gave it life. The forest lifts its arms and sways, the mighty ocean claps it waves all in praise to You. For if man withholds His praise then the rocks will cry out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, Who is, and was and is to come." Lord may we not withhold our praise from You. And how can we, in light of the most spectacular event in all of human history. Where O death is your sting? Where O grave is your victory? It has been swallowed up by the power of God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord! Jesus, may we fix our gaze on You and let the world hear Your praise. Because You have risen, we have life! Because You have defeated sin, we are loosed from our bondage. Because You tore the veil that separated us from God, we can approach the throne of grace with confidence.

To You be all glory, honor and praise.

Amen.



Introduction

W

hen I was a kid, Easter was a one day event that consisted of a lot of predictable events. My mom would buy me a new pastel shirt that, if I was lucky, I would never have to wear again. We dyed eggs in pungent vinegar with little colored tablets that looked a lot like sweet tarts. Gift baskets would arrive from my out of state grandma with a chocolate bunny the size of my head. I would feast on it for the next couple of months making a home for it in the freezer in between nibbles. Unfortunately, as a mostly unchurched kid, the resurrection of the Son of God never really made the highlights of my memories.

But even for the churched kid today the resurrection only plays a supporting role on most Easter Sundays. A lot of us may have moved on from pastels but new dresses and polos still dominate the landscape. Eggs may have a wider variety of decorating options but they still find themselves into the dense spring grass of most backyards. And while I think those enormous confectionary bunnies have been outlawed in 47 of the contiguous states (hold strong Mississippi!), we still manage to produce a few sugar induced comas this time of the year. Then we come to church, sing with tempered enthusiasm and listen to a rousing message to which we know the ultimate point...He is risen, He is risen in—what time is lunch?

It seems like a pretty decent effort. I mean what more can we expect to celebrate yet another holiday steamrolling down the calendar?

Well, when we stop and consider exactly what it is we are celebrating maybe it does demand, nay, evoke a little bit more. If we could picture all of history as a line with every event marked by a light with lumens equivalent to the significance of the event this is what we would see. At the very beginning a massive light similar to that of the first atomic bomb. God created everything. Hard to get more

significant than that. Then the light fades and pulsates between headlights and candle flickers. Not because important things haven't happened, but because of the disparity between them and the first light of creation. This pattern continues all the way until heaven splits open and the Light of the world descends in the form of a baby, with a multitude of heavenly hosts filling the sky—the timeline reignites to a full on solar eclipse. So bright we can't look at it with the naked eye. The Son of God came down to earth to rescue His people. Nothing like this had ever happened—the significance was off the chart. Then the timeline stays as bright as the noon day sun as Jesus walks the earth and rubs shoulders with man. Then we come to the time that we reflect on every spring. While darkness descended on the planet, as nails were driven into the hands of the creator, a surprising correlation takes place on the significance timeline—it grows brighter! Soon the eclipse is eclipsed as the darkest moment in human history begins to crescendo as the most glorious, significant, mind-boggling event slides into place. When the stone rolled away the timeline becomes indiscernible. A light so bright that it not only surpasses the rest but it consumes them. The apex of history. The single event that brings light and significance to every other thing under the sun. Death defeated, love succeeded. Satan's dethroning, sins atoning. Hope restored, slaves no more. This is Easter!

This Easter we want to help you reclaim the incomparable significance of the resurrection of Jesus. For an entire week we challenge you to sit down with your family and read the retelling of encounters people had with Jesus that made them want to follow Him. Ask the questions to your kids, memorize the verses together and pray as a family. Our hope is that through this process you will be more ready than ever to celebrate the pinnacle of human existence.

He is risen,

The  Team





FAMILY DEVOTIONAL 1

BECAUSE HE IS LOVE

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **ROMANS 5:8**

WHY DO I FOLLOW HIM? Well it all started at a tree in Jericho. At that time, I was the chief tax collector, the top in my field. I have to admit, I wasn't the most moral man in the world. Let's just say that I fit the stereotype that people in my profession had earned. I used my position of power to cheat the people of the city – charging more than they really owed for their taxes and keeping the extra for myself. For that reason, most of my fellow Jews didn't like me. I knew that they grumbled about me, calling me a traitor and complaining about my work. But I didn't need friends. I was a wealthy man, able to buy whatever I wanted. I thought I had it all. But something was still missing, and deep down inside I could feel the ache of that absence. Anyway, one day I heard that Jesus was coming through town on His way to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. I had heard many stories about this man. He had done things that were unexplainable, acts that were being called miracles. My curiosity took over, I had to see this man, just get a glimpse of Him. When I reached the road, the crowds had already gathered. People were everywhere. I pushed and shoved but couldn't make a dent in the mass of spectators. You see, I am a short man, and this was working against me. All I could see was the back of the crowd. I don't know what overcame me. It must have been the thrill of the moment. But before I knew what I was doing, I was running to a sycamore fig tree. Can you believe that? A city official scampering up a tree like a young kid. But I just had to see Jesus, no matter what it took. I reached up, branch after branch, and turned just in time to see a figure

parting His way through the crowd. Some people quieted, in awe that this famous man was indeed walking past them. Others cheered and shouted. But He just walked, calmly and peacefully, with a quiet determination. As He neared my perch, I stared, my heart beating faster. And then something incredible happened. Jesus stopped, looked straight up at me sitting in that tree and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down. Today I am going to stay at your house." My eyes widened in shock, my mouth hanging open. Jesus knew my name? Jesus was coming to my house? But, I didn't hesitate. I slid down the tree limbs as quickly as my short legs could carry me. As I hit the ground, I turned and smiled up at this famous man known as Jesus. "Yes, welcome. Follow me," I replied, still in amazement, and began leading Him to my home. As we walked I could hear the mocking of people. Their faces contorted in disapproval. I knew what they were thinking. Why did He choose Zacchaeus? He is a sinner. A bad man. In fact, it was exactly what I was thinking too. Why did Jesus, the rumored messiah, a man who claimed to be the Son of God, pick me, a tax collector, out of the crowd? The magnitude of the moment settled on my heart and I again looked up into His eyes. There I saw His reason – He loved me. Me, a sinner, a cheat, an untruthful thief. My heart flooded with warmth, the emptiness I'd once known filled. I stopped, unable to go on. "Lord," I said, now fully aware of who Jesus was. "I will give half of the things I have to the poor. And anyone I have cheated I will pay back four times as much as I stole from them." He just smiled at me and said in His steady voice, "Today you have salvation. You too are a son of Abraham. I came to save you, and all the others that are lost." And in that moment my life changed. I had been lost, lost indeed. But now, I was found. Jesus had picked me, the worst of the worst, out of the crowd and saved me from my sins. He loved me when no one else did. So why do I follow Him? Because He is love for everyone, that's why.

Read it

Read Luke 19:1-10 for the original story.

Talk about it

- What was Zacchaeus's job?
- Why was Zacchaeus considered a sinner?
- Do you think you could ever do something so bad that your parents wouldn't love you anymore?
- Do you think you could do something that would make God not love you anymore? (Read Rom 8:38-39)

Hide it in your heart

Memorize Romans 5:8 (at the top of the lesson)

Pray

Jesus, thank for loving me even when I am a sinner. Amen.



FAMILY DEVOTIONAL 2

BECAUSE HE IS WISE

For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. **1 CORINTHIANS 1:25**

WHY DO I FOLLOW HIM? That's an interesting story. Jesus had come to my hometown of Jerusalem, and since his arrival, his movements were being watched. Everyone wanted to see what He was going to do, to hear his teachings, whether they believed Him or not. His fame drew me in like so many others. I knew that He was in the temple that day preaching parables to the crowds, so I decided to go listen for myself. When I arrived, I noticed a group of Pharisees gathered in a corner whispering and shooting plotting looks in Jesus' direction. As I neared, I was able to pick up some of their plan. They wanted to trap Him by asking him difficult questions they thought might get Him into trouble. My interest was piqued. This should be an interesting showdown. The Pharisees and Sadducees had a problem with Jesus. Ever since His birth in a manger, people had been giving Him more attention and had even begun following Him, claiming that this was truly the Messiah that had been promised for so long to our people. In fact, Jesus had even been exposing these religious leaders in their hypocrisy. All of that to say, they were not happy with Jesus' growing popularity. Off they went to put their plan into action. I followed at a safe distance, and then gathered in close to hear the battle of the minds about to take place. First, the Pharisees approached Him and loudly said, "Teacher, we know that you are truthful. We also know that you teach the way of God." I scoffed silently as I watched these men make fools of themselves. Did they really think that they could win Jesus over



with their false flattery? Their hollow compliments made their intent obvious. On they went, “Then tell us, do you think that it is lawful for us to pay Caesar’s poll tax?” The crowd quietly murmured, anxious to hear Jesus’ answer. It seemed that there was no reply that would produce a good outcome. Either He sided with the Roman government, making Himself an enemy of the Jewish people, or He spoke out against the government, giving reason for His arrest. I leaned in to hear Him say, “Why are you testing me?” Jesus knew their plan! He saw through their effort to ensnare Him. “Show me a coin.” He held the coin up and asked, “Whose picture is on this coin?” When they replied, “Caesar,” He answered, “Then give it back to Caesar. Give the things which are Caesar’s to Caesar and give God the things that are God’s.” His answer was incredibly simple and yet also profound. Money was temporal, as was Caesar, sure to pass away with this earth. But God was eternal, and to Him belonged what really mattered, our hearts. The Pharisees slinked away, embarrassed and frustrated at their defeat. Next entered the Sadducees, sure they could do better than their fellow religious leaders. After a long and drawn out story about a woman marrying and losing several husbands, they asked, “Who will be her husband in the resurrection?” My mind was bogged down with the unrealistic situation they had posed. But Jesus wasn’t fazed. In His usual cool manner, He told about the resurrection, that marriage wasn’t going to be an establishment in that time. He reminded them that God was the God of the living. The crowd applauded, astonished at His knowledge. In a final attempt, a lawyer approached, sure of his years of studying and stock of scriptural facts. “Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?” The crowd went silent, eyes fixed on Jesus, breath held in anticipation for his reply. I grew nervous, unsure as to what was wisest for Him to choose. How could you pick just one? And then He spoke. “You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your mind. This is the greatest commandment.

The second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The audience exploded in approving cheers. The lawyer, Pharisees, and Sadducees hung their heads. They had been defeated at their own battle. And that was the moment I recognized Jesus as more than just a man. He truly was the Son of God, the Messiah. He spoke with calm wisdom, sure of the truth that He taught. It was unlike any man of this earth. So why do I follow Him? Because He is wise, that’s why.

Read it

Read Matthew 22:15-40 for the original story.

Talk about it

- What does wisdom mean?
- Who is the wisest person you know? Why?
- Why is it important that Jesus is so wise?
- Are there any questions you need to ask Jesus for answers to? What are they?

Hide it in your heart

Memorize 1 Corinthians 1:25 (at the top of the lesson)

Pray

Jesus you hold all wisdom. Give me wisdom on how I should live. Amen.



FAMILY DEVOTIONAL 3

BECAUSE HE IS COMPASSIONATE

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.” **EXODUS 34:6**

WHY DO I FOLLOW HIM? Because of what He did for my daughter. Years ago, when my only daughter was twelve years old she got very sick. Her mother and I watched helplessly as she got worse and worse. We tried everything we could, but she only came closer to death each day. I knew I had to do something drastic or I would lose my precious baby. I had heard of this man named Jesus who had performed miracles for a number of people. As a synagogue official, most of my colleagues were skeptical at best. Most of them viewed Jesus with jealousy and hatred. But I couldn't help but think that Jesus must be different. He must have a power and authority beyond that of men to be able to carry out such wonderful works. And in my most needy hour, I was desperate to try anything that might save my daughter. So, I waited along the shore of the Galilee one day, watching Jesus be carried across by boat. As He got closer, the crowd waiting for Him grew and grew until I was one in a sea of people. He reached the shore and was immediately surrounded by men, women and children hoping to get their time with Him. I pushed my way to the front and fell down before Him. With all my heart I begged Him, crying, “My young daughter is near death. Please Jesus, come lay your hands on her so that she will get better and live.” Tears streamed down my face as I choked on the words of my request. I wasn't sure He would even hear me in the huddled mass of people, but as I glanced upwards at Him, He smiled gently and said, “Lead me to her.” I jumped up, hardly believing He was

speaking to me. This was it! I was sure He could heal my daughter. I turned and we began working our way through the crowd. The swarm moved with us. People were everywhere, swept up in the march, touching, bumping, shoving, and traveling as one large group. Suddenly, Jesus stopped. The crowd, thrown by His halt quieted as He said, “Who touched me?” His disciples responded, “Jesus, there are people all over, many must have touched you.” But Jesus continued to search the faces of those nearest Him until His gaze stopped on one woman. She was huddled on the ground before Him, trembling in fear, but bowed in reverence. Jesus laid His hand upon her shoulder and said gently, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.” Later I learned that this woman had only touched the hem of Jesus' robe, desperate to be healed from a disease that had plagued her for many years. Her testimony of healing spread across the country as she claimed that she had only needed to touch His garment. However, in the moment of her healing, news reached me that my daughter had died. No. How could that be? My heart sunk with defeat, and grief began to weigh in on me until Jesus, overhearing the news, said, “Do not be afraid. Only believe.” I looked at Him, and seeing the resolve in his eyes, dried my tears and led Him the rest of the way. We arrived at the house to sounds of weeping and wailing. Jesus entered and asked, “Why are you crying? She is not dead, but simply asleep.” He instructed that everyone leave the room except my wife, myself and his disciples. I watched with breath held as He knelt beside my daughter's still body, took her hand and said, “Little girl, get up.” And she did. She sat up, smiled and ran over to me, embracing me in her loving hug. All I could do was sit in amazement. There, before my very eyes, my daughter had been healed, brought back to life. And it was all because Jesus had compassion on my family. He heard my story, listened to my woes, and responded with love and concern for us. So why do I follow Him? Because of His compassion, that's why.

Read it

Read Mark 5:22-43 for the original story.

Talk about it

- How was the woman healed?
- How did Jesus show compassion to the woman? To the man and his daughter?
- How has Jesus shown compassion to you? (Hint: The cross)
- What is one person and one way you can show compassion?

Hide it in your heart

Memorize Exodus 34:6 (at the top of the lesson)

Pray

Jesus thank you for caring enough about me to give your life in place of mine. Amen.



FAMILY DEVOTIONAL 4

BECAUSE HE FORGIVES

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 JOHN 1:9

WHY DO I FOLLOW HIM? Let me tell you a story. Long ago, I lived a sinful life. I won't go into the gruesome details, but my life and the choices I had made earned me a bad reputation that preceded me wherever I went. When I entered a room, people stared at me with disapproving eyes, shooting scowls and mocking laughs. My sin was laid out for the world to see, cloaking me in shame. I deserved it really, the mistakes I had made were mine. That's when I heard about Jesus. He was the Messiah, come from God to save us all. Stories of His mercy and grace were being told throughout the land, and I knew I had to see Him. When Jesus was in your town, you knew where He would be. His fame had spread and people followed Him continually, hoping to hear His teachings or witness a miracle. So, like most people, I knew that Jesus had been invited to the home of a Pharisee for dinner. I knew this was my chance to seek an audience with Him. But how could I approach the Son of God? Surely He knew my sin, every fleck of dirt that muddled my life. However, I also knew that I loved Him, greatly. After all, He had come to save us! I couldn't just sit back and not express my love for Him. Knowing that words would never do my heart justice, I grabbed my only possession of value, my alabaster vial of perfume. It had cost me 300 denarii, a year's salary, but it was all I had. When I arrived at the Pharisee's house I worked my way through the crowd that had gathered to listen to His teachings. As I got closer, my hands began to tremble, the weight of my sin pressing in on me. And yet, my eyes stayed



focused on Jesus, my heart pounding in my chest. I approached behind Him and knelt at His feet. Tears poured from my eyes as the guilt and shame of my life took over in the presence of this most wonderful man. I opened the perfume bottle, the pleasant smell weaving its way into the thick air around me. Remaining bowed I let my hair down, its long ends brushing the floor, enveloping me. And I cried. My tears fell on the feet of Jesus, each leaving its dotted stain. I rubbed perfume on His feet, and with my hair I washed them. The whole time I kept kissing His feet, unable to look up at His face. I was completely captured by the beautiful contrast of the moment. Me, a sinner, completely unworthy of the presence of Jesus, bowed here at His feet. My love for Him, my appreciation for who He was, overflowed from me. I didn't even notice the onlookers until the Pharisee broke the shocked silence. "If this man were a prophet as he claims, he would know what type of woman is touching him." I continued my act of worship as Jesus responded, "Simon, I have something to tell you." He went on to tell a story of two men in debt. One owed more than the other, and yet both were forgiven when unable to repay the lender. Jesus asked, "Which one will love the lender more?" The Pharisee replied, "I guess the one with the larger debt." Jesus nodded. "You're correct," He confirmed. That's when He turned to me. He lifted my chin to match His gaze to mine. "Do you see this woman?" He said with great gentleness. "She has washed my feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair and anointed me with perfume. You did no such thing when I entered your home. For this reason, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven. She loved me greatly." Did I hear Him correctly? My sins were forgiven? Surely I was too far gone as the rest of the world seemed to have decided. But, ignoring those around that were questioning His authority in such matters, Jesus smiled and said, "Your faith has saved you, go in peace." In that moment, at the feet of Jesus, my tears ceased to flow, my guilt and shame lifted. I was free. Free

from the sinful life that had kept me captive for so long. I left that house changed, renewed, forgiven. So why do I follow Him? Because of His forgiveness, that's why.

Read it

Read Luke 7:36-50 for the original story.

Talk about it

- What did the woman do to Jesus?
- Forgiveness means to cancel a debt. What debt did the woman have that was forgiven? (Hint: Sin creates an unpayable debt to God)
- The woman was forgiven because of her faith. Read Ephesians 2:8-9. How does faith lead to forgiveness?
- Do you have sin you need to be forgiven of?

Hide it in your heart

Memorize 1 John 1:9 (at the top of the lesson)

Pray

Jesus please forgive me for the sin in my life. Amen.



Heads Up...

Tomorrow is “devo on location”.

For the full experience you will want to take your family to the prayer garden at the center of all the buildings to do your family devotion. It will be worth it.



FAMILY DEVOTIONAL 5

BECAUSE HE IS POWERFUL

*** For this devo head to the prayer garden at the church.**

The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

MATTHEW 8:27

WHY DO I FOLLOW HIM? I have followed Jesus for a long time. He has even taught inside my home. I believed in His position as the Messiah, in His claim to be the Son of God for many years, but the story of my brother is beyond that of any I’ve heard. Jesus was a good friend to my family. My brother Lazarus, sister Mary and I loved Him deeply. So when my brother got sick, Mary and I sent word to Jesus. This wasn’t just a sickness that called for rest, but one we knew would end in death. We knew Jesus loved our brother and would want to at least know of his condition. We also knew that Jesus had the power to heal him if that was His will. Our message to Him didn’t contain any particular plea, although I’d be lying if I said that we didn’t hope He would come and heal Lazarus. We waited, but sure enough Lazarus took his last breath. Mary and I, along with our friends and family were filled with sorrow. We proceeded with the burial. We wrapped our brother’s body following the traditions of our people and laid him to rest in a tomb. Four days later Jesus finally arrived. We had many visitors coming to pay their respects but when I heard Jesus was getting close I ran out to meet Him. Our little town of Bethany was only two miles away from Jerusalem, and this area was very dangerous for Jesus. Being a marked man, there were government officials waiting to arrest Him and I knew that His arrival was risky. But the danger didn’t keep Jesus away,



His love for us was too great. When I reached Him I said, “Oh Jesus, you’re too late. If you had been here my brother might not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, He will give it to you.” Like I said, I had faith in Jesus. His late arrival didn’t change that. Jesus, with His usual comforting tone replied, “Your brother will rise again.” I appreciated His reminder and responded, “Yes, I know that he will rise in the resurrection.” Jesus’ next statement was odd and a little confusing to me at the time. He said, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” At the moment, I wasn’t sure that I fully understood, but I nodded and confirmed that I believed He was the Christ, the Son of God, the promised Messiah. He instructed me to go get Mary, so I ran off to fetch her. Back at the house, I was once again greeted by a crowd of mourners, and when I pulled Mary away, they followed us. We reached Jesus once more and Mary fell to the ground at His feet. My heart ached as I listened to my sister choke out the echo of my words, “Lord if you had only been here, our brother would not have died.” She collapsed in her weeping and with tears running down my cheeks I looked at Jesus, waiting for His response. His expression was soft and sad. In a quiet voice He said, “Where is he buried?” As we turned to lead the way, I heard Jesus weep. The people around me remarked at Jesus’ love for Lazarus and others questioned why He couldn’t have saved him. But I stayed quiet and just walked alongside the weeping Savior. When we arrived at the tomb entrance Jesus said, “Remove the stone.” I looked up, puzzled by His request. I reminded Him of the lapse in time since Lazarus’ death and warned of the stench that would have consumed the tomb. But He simply replied, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” So we removed the stone and watched Jesus’ every move with anticipation and wonder, not knowing what would happen next. Jesus looked up to heaven and prayed, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.

I know that You always hear Me; but because of those standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me.” And then in a loud, booming voice Jesus commanded, “Lazarus come out!” My eyes widened and I turned immediately to see the entrance of the tomb. And there, in the black hole that led into the cave, appeared my brother, still bound in his wrappings. I was awestruck, amazed, speechless. Words just can’t explain my feeling in that moment. I didn’t know whether to run and embrace Lazarus or fall at the feet of Jesus in humbled gratitude. But I knew that my brother who had died in front of my eyes, the brother I’d wrapped and laid in a tomb days before, the brother I had grieved for, was standing before me, very much alive. I had witnessed the glory of God through His life-giving power. Jesus had been victorious over death. This was most certainly the Son of God in flesh, worthy to be praised. So, why do I follow Him? Because of His power, even power over death. That’s why.

Read it

Read John 11:1-45 for the original story.

Talk about it

- What is the most powerful thing you have ever seen?
- Can you think of anything harder to do than bringing someone back to life (who has been dead for 4 days)?
- Is Lazarus still alive or did he eventually die again?
- Is Jesus still live? (Read Acts 2:22-32)

Hide it in your heart

Memorize Matthew 8:27 (at the top of the lesson)

Pray

Jesus no one is more powerful than you, not even death. Help me to trust you with my life. Amen.



Activity

After you have completed your devo go up to the cross and everyone in your family take a stone and write on it in one word to describe why YOU follow Jesus. Then place the stones back at the base of the cross. Then take one additional blank stone home with you to remind your family that the stone was removed to reveal that Jesus was risen!

Come and experience the
ultimate reason we follow Jesus.

SATURDAY, APRIL 15TH

4:00 | 5:30p

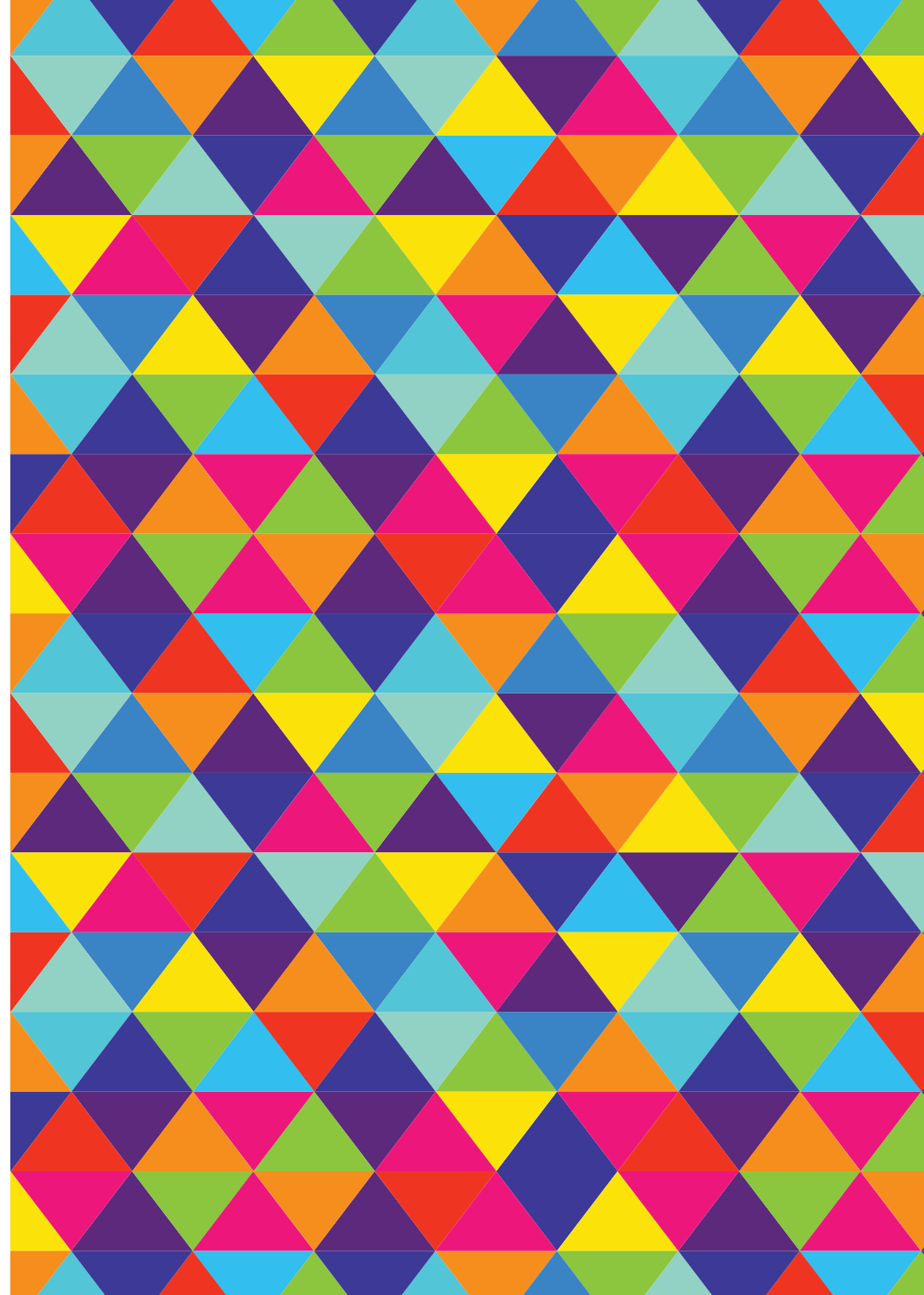
or

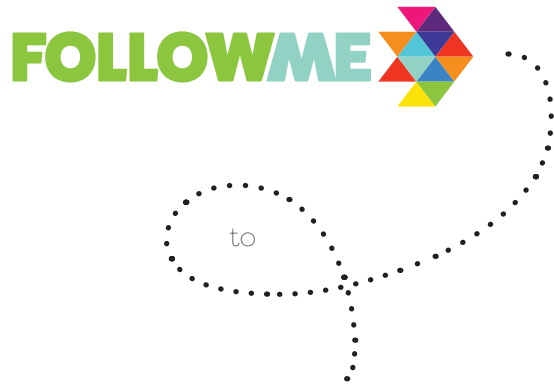
SUNDAY, APRIL 16TH

8:00 | 9:15 | 10:45a

Oakwood Church | 2154 Loop 337, New Braunfels TX

Let's celebrate the Light that could not be
extinguished. Death couldn't hold Him, the
grave couldn't keep Him, for He is risen!





to



2154 Loop 337 New Braunfels TX

830.625.0267 | oakwoodnb.com