

Four Weeks to Celebrate Easter 2015

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Week One (March 15-21) Miracles

Family and personal scripture study: Read and study miracles Jesus performed during his life on earth. Healings, feeding multitudes, forgiving sins, casting out devils, raising the dead, controlling nature (calming the storm, filling nets with fish), etc. Take time to read and ponder the definition of “miracles” in the Bible Dictionary. Ask yourself and those you study with:

- What miracle(s) is my favorite? Why?
- What miracles that Jesus performed are a pattern for similar miracles I’ve witnessed in my life and the lives of those around me? Compare the details of the miracle in the scriptures with the details of the miracle you’ve seen. Record your testimony of this miracle in your journal.
- What miracle would you have loved to witness Jesus perform? Why? What specifically appeals to you about that miracle?
- What miracle would you like to call down on someone you love? Why?
- How does the Bible Dictionary definition of “miracles” broaden or clarify your experiences with miracles? Talk/write about the symbolic lessons of specific miracles recorded in the New Testament.

Suggested miracles to study (one per day):

- Healing at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-15) see Bible video online “Jesus Heals a Lame Man on the Sabbath”
- Jairus’ daughter raised from the dead (Matt 9:18-19, 23-26; Mark 5:21-24, 35-43; Luke 8:41-42, 49-56) see Bible video online
- Feeding 5,000 (Matt 14:16-21; Mark 6:33-44; Luke 9:11-17; John 6:5-14) see Bible video online
- Four bring the paralyzed man through the roof (Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:16-26) see Bible video online “Jesus Forgives Sins and Heals a Man Stricken with Palsy”
- Blind man healed by stages (Mark 8:22-26)
- Healing a possessed man (Luke 4:33-37) see Bible video online
- Calming the tempest (Matt 8:18-22; Mark 4:37-40; Luke 8:22-25) see Bible video online

Click [here](#) to be redirected to the LDS Bible Videos Index.

Activities

- Set up Easter tree using forsythia branches in a vase—let kids decorate the branches with small gospel art images each day after studying scriptures. (We printed pass-along-card size copies of gospel art images at Costco photo and glued a ribbon hanger to each.)
- Look at artwork depicting these miracles. Notice details that artist used to convey what struck a chord of importance to him/her. How does this resonate with or expand your understanding of the miracle? Create your own artistic rendering of a miracle from the scriptures of your own experience. Share it with others.

- Watch and discuss the LDS [“Life of Jesus Christ Bible Video”](#) online that represents the miracle you read about. Discuss or write about how seeing the miracle dramatized changes your understanding. Pay careful attention to moments in the film when you feel the Spirit. What is the Spirit telling you?
- Write in your journal about a miracle the Savior performed for you.

Week Two (March 22-28) Teachings

Family and personal scripture study: Read and study Jesus’ teachings as recorded in the gospels. Consider how to apply these teachings in your life. What experiences have you had that testified of the truth of these teachings? Apply the parables to your personal experience—how do the parables differ from and mirror your understanding of these teachings. Specifically look at:

- Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5) there are several Bible videos for this sermon
- Bread of Life (see John 6) and living water (John 4): both these teachings have Bible videos that dramatize them
- Parables (lost items and prodigal son, good Samaritan, ten virgins, wheat and tares, mustard seed and leaven, unmerciful servant, great supper) see Bible videos to accompany many of these parables
- Light of the world, let your light shine (John 8:12-58) see Bible video online “Jesus Declares: I Am the Light of the World”
- Treasure on earth or in heaven (Matt 6:19-34; Luke 11:34-36, 12:22-34, 16:9-13) see Bible video
- Counting the cost (Luke 14:25-35)
- Ask, seek, knock
- Suffer the little children (Luke 18:15-17) see Bible video
- Jesus is the Lamb of God (see John 1:29) and the Good Shepherd (see John 10). Think about the Passover lamb (see Exodus 12) and how this Old Testament covenant compares to the New Testament covenant of the Atonement. See Bible video online “Good Shepherd and Other Sheep I Have”
- “Mary hath chosen the better part” (Luke 10:38-42)

click [here](#) to access LDS bible videos.

Activities

- Look at artistic images that represent Jesus’ teachings. Notice details that artist used to convey what struck a chord of importance to him/her. How does this resonate with or expand your understanding of the story? Create your own artistic rendering of a parable or teaching of the Savior. Share it with others.
- Watch and discuss the LDS “Life of Jesus Christ Bible Video” online that represents each teaching/parable. Discuss or write about how seeing the story acted out changes your understanding. Pay careful attention to moments in the film when you feel the Spirit. What is the Spirit telling you?
- Make oil lamps when talking about the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

- Act out parables and discuss how going through the motions helps you understand the meaning of the story.
- Pick a few of Jesus' teachings to memorize over the week.

Week Three (March 29-April 4) Holy Week: Palm Sunday through Resurrection

Family and personal scripture study: Read and discuss the events of the final week of Jesus' life. Each day read and ponder the meaning of that day's event as it felt for Jesus, his apostles, his followers, and the significance for generations and individuals now. Imagine and write about/discuss how you would have felt to be present for that event. Consider how these daily events fulfilled prophecies.

(some of the ideas for this holy week were inspired by [A Christ Centered Easter](#) by Janet and Joe Hales)

Day One: Palm Sunday

- **Scripture Reading:** Matthew 21: 1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-36
- **Ideas for Discussion:**
 - o Discuss the symbolism of palm branches (see Dorothy D. Warner, "[Exploring: Palms for the Lord](#)," Friend, March 1996 for a reference).
 - o Discuss what your family might do to show your joy if Jesus were to come to your home today.
 - o Discuss the meaning of the word "Hosanna" (see Bible Dictionary)
 - o Discuss the expectations Jesus' followers had for him as their King, compared to the way the week ended—with his suffering and death. As our savior, Jesus' role is to meet our needs not our expectations. How has the Atonement been more or different than what you expected it to be? Share a personal example of a time you were like these disciples who expected Jesus to be their political savior, but in fact his mission was as their Redeemer from sin and death. How has your understanding of Jesus' role in as the Savior changed over the past several years?
- **Activity Ideas:**
 - o Make Palm Branches using cardboard (for spines) and green paper. Act out the triumphal entry. Characters include: Narrator (reading from Mark 11: 1-11), Disciple(s) sent in search, Christ, Donkey colt, Donkey's owner(s), disciples shouting "hosanna."
 - o Watch the LDS [Bible video](#) of the triumphal entry.
 - o Choose a resurrection Hymn or a sacrament hymn to learn during the week. Talk about the lyrics and sing it each day together.

Day Two: Monday—Cleansing the Temple

- **Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:12-18; Mark 11:12-19, Luke 19:45-48. Watch Bible video online.
- **Ideas for discussion:**

- o Discuss the progression of the temple cleansing as it applies to our own lives: purging, learning, receiving blessings (healing), praising (see Matthew 21:12-16).
- o Given Jesus' action in the temple, discuss how he would feel in your own family's home? How might he cleanse it? As a family, choose one way to purify your home and make that your goal for the week.
- **Activity Ideas:**
 - o Take a family trip to the temple and talk about the holy feeling you experience there. Imagine how Jesus must have felt to see people act irreverently in his father's house. Talk about the word "sacred" and how you can show respect for sacred things.
 - o Read the "[First Easter](#)" by Julie Wardell (*Friend*, April 1988)
 - o Reenact the cleansing of the temple, maybe with a focus on how to stand firm for what is right and be stern without being mean.
 - o Consider how the cleansing of the temple relates to cleaning the house carefully before Passover.

Day Three: Tuesday—Parables and teachings of Jesus

- **Scripture Reading:** choose a teaching or parable of Jesus to discuss that you didn't have time for during week two.
- **Activity Ideas:**
 - o Dye Easter eggs and talk about the symbolism of eggs and the significance of Easter being celebrated in springtime.
 - o Play parable charades.
 - o Make up your own parable with modern and/or ancient meaning.
 - o Go on an Easter Walk or scavenger hunt (on Tuesday or Wednesday depending on weather): look for things in nature that represent Christ and the events of Easter week (see Attachment 1). Maybe encourage children to make a beautiful centerpiece for dinner using the items they found.

Day Four: Wednesday—Rest in Bethany

- **Discussion and Activity Ideas:**
 - o Make a list of Jesus' character traits and pick one to work on for the next week.
 - o If you plan on doing a Passover dinner, take this day to discuss some of the events of the Last Supper and Gethsemane to prepare for day five (because you may not have time to discuss those things AND have a Seder).
 - o Discuss what you might do to prepare for Passover. Participate in the Jewish tradition of cleaning the house together to get ready for the Passover (see Matthew 26:17-19).

Day Five: Thursday—Last Supper and Jesus' prayer and agony in Gethsemane

- **Scripture Reading:**

- o Read from the scriptures the events that occurred during the Last Supper, the betrayal and Christ's agony in Gethsemane. Matt: 26:17-75; Mark 14:12-72; Luke 22:7-65; John 13:1-18,27. See Bible videos.
- o Read John 13: 4-15 and discuss why it was important that Jesus wash the apostles' feet
- o Read and discuss Christ's description of his suffering, in D&C 19:16-19.
- **Activity ideas:**
 - o On Thursday evening have a simple Passover Seder (see Attachment 2).
 - o Wash a family members' feet.
 - o Watch the LDS [Bible video](#) depicting the last supper.

Day Six: Friday—Good Friday (Jesus' Trial and Crucifixion)

- **Scripture Reading:** Matt 27:1-61, Mark 15:1-47, Luke: 22: 66-23:56, John 18:28-19:42
- **Activity Ideas:**
 - o Have a "Stations of the Cross-type" walk where you read/discuss/and perform tasks to move through the various steps of Jesus' journey from the Garden of Gethsemane to the cross. (See Attachment 3)
 - o Turn off all electricity (maybe for 3 hours?) use only candles at night to commemorate the three hours that darkness covered the land while Christ hung on the cross.
 - o Read or listen to Elder Holland's talk ("[None Were with Him](#)," by Elder Jeffrey Holland, April 2009) and think about a time when you felt alone. How have you felt the presence of God at these lonely times.
 - o Watch [LDS Bible](#) videos dramatizing Jesus' trial and crucifixion.

Day Seven: Saturday—Jewish Sabbath

- **Scripture Reading and Discussion ideas:**
 - o Matthew 27:62-66, Luke 23:56
 - o Imagine how the disciples felt during those three days when Jesus' body lay in the tomb. Read 3 Nephi 8-9 for an account of what happened during those three days on the other side of the world. The Nephites and Lamanites were in complete darkness, which followed terrible destruction, for those three days, yet during that time they heard the voice of the Lord. How do these scriptural examples of a time of darkness and disappointment inspire and comfort you? When have you felt the voice of the Lord speaking to you in a dark and fearful hour?
 - o Maybe use this day to do traditional Easter egg hunts/Easter bunny activities so that Easter Sunday can focus more fully on celebrating the resurrection.

Day Eight: Easter Sunday—Jesus' Resurrection

- **Scripture Reading:** Matthew 28:1-15, Mark: 16: 1-12; Luke 24: 1-49; John 20:1-23
- **Ideas for discussion:**
 - Discuss the range of emotions that Mary Magdalene or Mary the mother of Jesus

must have felt on this day.

- Discuss how you might have felt at seeing the Resurrected Lord. What emotions might you have felt? (confusion? fear? faith? joy?)
- **Activity Ideas:**
 - Wake up the house with Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" from the Messiah
 - Meet in the morning for a special sunrise Easter devotional. Sing a resurrection hymn and retell the sacred story of Jesus' first appearance as the resurrected Savior.
 - "Resurrection egg" hunt for the 12 eggs that tell Easter story, ending with the empty egg to represent the empty tomb. (Here's a link for how to make your own <http://womenlivingwell.org/2012/03/the-jesus-story-easter-eggs-fun-for-kids/>)
 - Encourage family members to spend some time alone reflecting on their testimony of Jesus Christ, praying, and writing in their journal. Study and ponder the sacrament prayers, take a personal inventory to help think about what you might change to be closer to the Savior or more like him.

Week Four (April 5-11) The Resurrected Christ

Family and personal scripture study: Each day of this week read and write about/discuss various disciples' reactions to and interactions with the resurrected Lord. Put yourself in each person's shoes. How do you feel before, during, and after seeing the resurrected savior? What does Jesus do to show his authenticity to each person? What does he do to show compassion? What does Jesus teach the people to whom he shows himself?

- Mary
- Peter, John, other disciples
- Thomas, who doubted until he saw and touched
- The disciples on the road to Emmaus
- The Nephites/Lamanites in *The Book of Mormon*
- The Twelve apostles get a boat full of fish, told to "feed his lambs"

Finally, consider the promise that Jesus will come to earth again. What do you imagine this Second Coming to be like? What do the prophecies say about the Second Coming? How do you feel as you consider that you may be a witness of this triumphant return?

Activities

- Read some Psalms: 23, 24, 100, 113, 136, 146, 149. Write your own family psalm of praise.
- Eat fish and honeycomb
- Watch "[Finding Faith in Christ](#)" LDS video, which dramatizes the apostle Thomas' testimony of the resurrected Savior.
- Watch [Bible videos](#) that dramatize the resurrected Christ appearing to and teaching in Jerusalem.

Attachment 1
Easter Walk

Give participants a list of what to find and a bag to put their treasures in. When you gather together at the end of the walk, have participants take out their treasures one by one and discuss how each relates to the Easter story, using the chart and scripture references below.

On your walk find:

- something sharp
- something prickly or thorny
- something made of wood
- something dead
- something dark or black
- something round and smooth
- something fragrant
- something soft
- something living
- something colorful and beautiful
- something that captures water (you don't have to put this one in your bag)
- something light in color, or that captures light

Item	Symbolic of	Scripture
something sharp	Jesus' pain in the Garden	Luke 22:44, Matt 26:38-41
something prickly or thorny	the crown of thorns placed on Christ's head	Mark 15:17
something made of wood	the cross	John 19:17-18
something dead	Christ's death	Luke 23:46
something dark or black	the darkness that covered the earth at His death	Luke 23: 44-45
something round and smooth	the stone rolled in front of the tomb	Mark 15:46
something fragrant	the herbs and spices brought to anoint Christ's body	Mark 16:1
something soft	the linens Mary found in the tomb on Easter morning	Mark 15:46
something living	Christ's resurrection	Matthew 28:5-6
something colorful and beautiful	The hope and joy that comes through the Atonement of Jesus Christ	Alma 36:18-21
something that captures or contains water	Christ is living water.	John 4:11-14
something light in color	Jesus is the light of the world.	John 9:5

Attachment 2

Passover Seder

Passover is the oldest and most important of Jewish religions festivals, commemorating God's deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt and his creation of the Israelite people. The term Passover refers to the tenth and final plague God brought upon the Egyptians that would kill the firstborn. The Israelites had to mark their doors with blood so that God would "pass over" their home.

Seder means "order." In traditional Jewish Seders there is an order in which people drink four glasses of wine and tell the story of the passover. It is a long dinner celebration, lasting 2-3 hours sometimes. We're going to do a much simpler version to help us feel connected to our Jewish roots, the powerful truths of deliverance that we learn in the story of the children of israel and remember that Christ was a Jew.

The last supper was likely part of the Christ's Passover celebration. Here Christ introduced the sacrament, washed his disciples' feet, and told his disciples important things that were to come.

Tonight we eat foods that Christ might have eaten (lentil soup, figs, bread as 'sop', pita, hummus) and talk about and taste some of the symbolic foods that people eat during a traditional Passover Seder.

This is a celebration. While we should be respectful and listen to each other and try to understand the importance of these symbols, we don't have to be solemn and quiet and serious. We are celebrating deliverance!

Preparation:

It's traditional to clean the house thoroughly before the Passover Seder. You are to remove any trace of chametz (leaven)...we don't do this, but I love the idea of getting the kids to clean up! This is supposed to signify an attitude of penitence, willingness to remove any corrupting influence and submit to God in obedience.

Set the table a little more fancy than usual. Put out candles and jerusalem plates. You could also sit on the floor with cushions. Make sure all the symbolic foods are on the table. Traditionally there is a Seder plate set out with the symbolic foods placed on it in an orderly way.

Hide several pieces of regular raised bread around the house for the children to find before you start dinner.

Washing of the hands. From antiquity, Jews perform a ritual hand-washing before meals.

You can set a place for Elijah.

When you call the children to the table ask them to find all the leaven in the house and bring it to the table. Talk a little about how we are supposed to remove anything within ourselves that is prideful, puffed up, contrary to God's will.

The mother should light the passover candles. The candles symbolize the presence of God and mark this as a sacred time.

Start with a blessing on the food.

During the meal

As we eat we talk about the symbolism of the foods:

Roasted lamb shank bone: One of the most striking symbols of Passover is the roasted lamb shank bone (called *zeroah*), which commemorates the paschal (lamb) sacrifice made the night the ancient Hebrews fled Egypt. Some people say it symbolizes the outstretched arm of God (the Hebrew word *zeroah* can mean "arm").

Roasted egg: The roasted egg (*baytsah*) is a symbol in many different cultures, usually signifying springtime and renewal. Here it stands in place of one of the sacrificial offerings which was performed in the days of the Second Temple. This egg isn't even eaten during the meal; the shell just needs to look really roasted.

Maror ("bitter herb"): Any bitter herb will work, though horseradish is the most common. Bitter herbs bring tears to the eyes and recall the bitterness of slavery. The Seder refers to the slavery in Egypt, but people are called to look at their own bitter enslavements, whether addiction or habit.

Charoset: The sweetness of this salad made of apples and nuts is to symbolize the sweetness god can bring. It is to be eaten after the bitter herb. It also is supposed to remind us of the mortar that the israelites used to build with during their time of slavery.

Karpas: A vegetable other than bitter herbs, which is dipped into salt water at the beginning of the Seder. Parsley, celery or boiled potato is usually used. The dipping of a simple vegetable bounces into salt water (which represents tears) mirrors the pain felt by the Hebrew slaves in Egypt.

Salt water: Salt water symbolizes the tears and sweat of enslavement, though paradoxically, it's also a symbol for purity, springtime, and the sea, the mother of all life. Often a single bowl of salt water sits on the table into which each person dips their karpas during the Seder.

Matzah: Perhaps the most important symbol on the Seder table is a plate that has a stack of three pieces of *matzah* (unleavened bread) on it. The *matzot* (that's plural for *matzah*) are

typically covered with a cloth. People have come up with numerous interpretations for the three matzot. Some say they represent the Kohen class (the Jewish priests in ancient times), the Levites (who supported the priests), and the Israelites (the rest of the Jews). What symbolism you attribute to this trinity isn't all that important, as long as you're thinking about it.

During the struggles of Soviet Jewry, a fourth piece of matzah was added to the Seder plate to symbolize the struggles of Jews who were not yet free enough to celebrate the Passover. Today, some families still use that fourth matzah as a way of remembering all people who are not yet free to celebrate as they wish.

Wine cups and wine (or grape juice): Everyone at the Seder has a (usually very small) cup or glass from which they drink four cups of wine. Traditionally, the four cups represent the four biblical promises of redemption: "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you from their slavery, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments. And I will take you to me for a people . . ."

During the meal we also try to discuss:

- The story of the children of Israel and their deliverance from slavery
- The last supper and what happened during it. If things are going well, read a little about it from the New Testament.

Finish the meal with a hymn just as Christ did with his disciples at the last supper.

Other:

- You can have kids wash each others feet before the meal. This isn't only what Christ did during the last supper, it was a Jewish tradition for the servants to wash the masters' feet before the meal.
- Grocery List:
 - grape juice (lots of it, enough for four cups per person)
 - Matza or some kind of unleavened bread (you can make this too)
 - Horseradish/romaine
 - Parsley
 - Lamb
 - Eggs

Good Friday—Stations of the Cross Ideas

This is a solemn activity that should be conducted with the utmost reverence. The idea is to move from space to space in your house/yard to ponder the journey our Savior took from the Garden of Gethsemane to the Garden Tomb. Elder Holland's talk ("None Were with Him," by Elder Jeffrey Holland, April 2009) may be helpful to read as you prepare for this activity. Have items ready in advance, as well as your scriptures nearby. Say a prayer and sing a hymn before beginning and ask for the Spirit to be with you as you consider these events. This activity will help children feel, understand, and remember these events using physical items and activities that relate to the events of Good Friday.

1. Gethsemane

Luke 22:40-46

Item: olive leaf, picture of olive press

Picture of Christ with angel

Discuss: Alma 34—take upon him all of our sorrows. What does it mean to succor?

2. Betrayal

Luke 22:47-48

Item: ten dimes

Discuss: betrayal, how it feels.

3. Christ condemned before Caiaphas

Mark 14:55-61, 62-65

Item: cloth to rent/tear

Discuss: humiliation, kindness in the face of cruelty, what does "blasphemy" mean?

4. Christ before Pilate

Matt 27:2, 11-14 and Isaiah 53:7

He answered nothing

5. Christ before Herod

Luke 23:7-10

He answered nothing again

6. Christ before Pilate (second time)

Matt 27:24-25

Item/activity: wash hands

7. Christ scourged and mocked by soldiers: crown of thorns, scarlet robe, whipped.

Matthew 27:27-30

Item/activity: Make crown of thorns

8. Walk to Golgotha (bear cross)

Matt 27:32

Simon asked to help him. Multitude followed him, sorrowing for him. He told them not to sorrow, that they should cry for their children who will see horrid things.

Item/activity: carry a heavy piece of wood on your shoulders/back and walk (uphill if possible)

9. Nailed to cross between two thieves

Discuss: Golgotha (place of the skull), sign that read "king of the Jews"

Item/activity: nail a nail into a board

10. Soldiers mock him, give him vinegar, tell him to save himself.

Luke 23:36-37, 34 Mark 15:29-32

Discuss: Christ forgives them, they know not what they do. They cast lots for his clothes.

Activity: cast lots (throw dice)

11. Christ asks disciple to care for Mary, who is there.

John 19:25-27

12. Darkness in the land: "why has thou forsaken me"

Matthew 27:46

Item/Activity: blow out candle

Discuss: why God withdrew. Did he really? "None Were with Him," by Elder Jeffrey Holland, April 2009.

13. Giving up the Ghost

Matt 27:48-54

Discuss: He says that he thirsts. Is given a sponge full of vinegar to drink. Christ cries and gives up the ghost. Temple veil rent in twain, earthquake and rocks rent. Graves opened up. Darkness in the land. Centurion said that Jesus was a righteous man.

Item/Activity: taste vinegar

14. Stabbed in the side

John 19:31-37

15. His body taken off the cross, wrapped in linen, and placed in the tomb with a stone rolled over.

Luke 23:50-56

Rested for the Sabbath.