



EMPTIED
TO RECEIVE

REST AND REDEMPTION
FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Four weeks of
Resting with God

Emptied to Receive Devotional Guide: *Resting with God*

❖ *Why this special focus?*

Just as Advent is a time to remember, anticipate and celebrate the incarnation of Christ, this time of year (known as *Lent*) gives us the opportunity to re-center our lives by recalling the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Lent is hard, and it can be frustrating to lose our focus and surrender to our weaknesses time and time again. In our context, it is easy to get lost in the cultural expectations of Easter and miss the meaning. That is why so many of the saints before us encouraged meditation and stillness as a sure way to place ourselves in God's presence and grow with him. Through times of meditation and reflection, we take our eyes off ourselves, and we rest faithfully in the hands of God. As we practice these ancient spiritual disciplines, we adequately prepare our minds and hearts for the gift of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Instead of arriving distracted and exhausted on Easter Sunday, we walk joyfully into church ready and eager to adore our resurrected King.

❖ *How do I use this devotional guide?*

This guide will walk you through the month of April as you pursue rest with God. Each week includes a Scripture reading that will compliment Micah's message, as well as a framework for reflecting or meditating on the main theme for the week (*rest, hope, life and assurance*).

Each Sunday, you will read the provided passages and also consider journaling, discussing, praying through and living out the truths of each passage. This guide is not meant to only be utilized on Sundays, but daily as an encouragement to pursue rest with God.

❖ *How do I get started on theological reflection and journaling?*

As you read, discuss and pray through the selected scriptures, hopefully many questions will begin to emerge in your mind and heart. However, as a starting point, consider using these general questions:

1. What do these passages of Scripture reveal about the nature and character of God?
2. What do these passages reveal about your own spiritual condition – your heart, mind and soul?
3. What do these passages reveal about the necessity of fellowship and community? What about the nature of the kingdom of God?
4. How should you respond to these revelations? What actions are you called to take to better align yourself with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus?

❖ *What about my children and/or teenagers?*

Inside the guide, families with elementary aged kids will find the *CHILDREN'S CORNER* for each new week. A set of *Resurrection Eggs* will be used to accompany this guide for children ages 6th grade and younger. **Please pick up 1 egg carton per family at the Ministry Table in the Gathering Room.** This section includes an age appropriate scripture focus, reflection questions, prayers, and activities. This will serve to help engage your children in the discussion throughout the week. **Note:** 12 eggs are included in the Resurrection Egg carton. We will open 3 eggs per week as directed in the guide. We encourage families with teens to treat them as adults as you include them in your weekly readings and discussions.

❖ *What is the goal of the Emptied to Receive Guide?*

The goal is that you will engage in some God-focused rhythms like scripture reading, meditation, prayer, journaling and gospel-oriented action to prepare your whole self for being a dwelling place for the Resurrected Redeemer, Jesus the Son of the Living God.

Week 1 (March 24 -30): **Be Still My Soul: *emptying of pride to receive rest***

Weekly Focus: In this meditation, you will contemplate Psalm 131. In this brief text, the author demonstrates how we should come to the Lord with simple child-like trust. It is a psalm of humility, contentment and rest in the loving arms of God.

Weekly Text: Psalm 131

Supplemental Passages: Hebrews 3:7-4:13

For Practice: before you read Psalm 131. Relax your body by taking three deep breaths. Be still and pray a simple prayer to quiet your mind. Spend **one minute** in silence.

For Reflection: This week we will reflect on a phrase from Psalm 131 – “I have stilled and quieted my soul.” Hebrew writers used the word ‘NEPHESH’, which is translated as ‘SOUL’ in English, to refer to the whole person – both the body and mind. The author says they have “stilled and quieted” their entire person. They have stilled the body and quieted the mind.

As the Lord brings it to mind, repeat this passage slowly, silently or aloud as you relax your body...“I have stilled and quieted my soul”...“I have stilled and quieted my soul”...“I have stilled and quieted my soul.”

Now that your body and mind are still, you are ready to focus on God’s Word. David begins by writing, “My heart is not proud, O Lord.”

The word “heart” refers to our inner person, our thoughts, and our will. Pride is the sin of being preoccupied with self; of seeing yourself as more important than God and those around you; of thinking your ways are higher than God’s or others around you.

In addition to the above phrase, as the Lord brings it to mind repeat verse one slowly and silently in your mind and ask God to reveal areas of pride in your life. Repent of these areas of pride and ask for humility and rest. Repeat, “My heart is not proud, O Lord”...“My heart is not proud, O Lord”...“My heart is not proud, O Lord.”

Weekly Prayer:

“Father God, Almighty maker of heaven and earth: set up your kingdom realities in our midst. Make me more like you.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God: have mercy on me, a sinner and empty me of my pride so that I can receive your rest.

Holy Spirit, breath of the living God: renew me and ignite within me a passion to live humbly for your glory and the sake of the world.” Amen.

CHILDREN'S CORNER – week 1

We will open Resurrection Eggs 1, 2, and 3 this week. Feel free to space these out as it makes sense in your family schedule.

EGG 1 = Palm Branch

Scripture focus = Matthew 21:9

EGG 2 = Silver Coins

Scripture focus = Matthew 26:14-15

EGG 3 = Last Supper

Scripture focus = Matthew 26:26-28

Reflection Questions:

What is pride?

What is rest? (Consider talking with your children about what physical rest, mental rest, and rest for your soul means to you.)

Weekly Prayer:

Lord, help me to focus on Your love and Your goodness. Please help me to think of others and to not be so focused on the things that I want for myself. Help me to understand how to rest my body, mind, and soul so that I can worship You more fully and love others well.

PRAYER JOURNAL

God, I love you because..._____

Today, I need forgiveness for..._____

I want to pray for..._____

Lord, please help me..._____

Thank you for..._____

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activities:

- Scripture reading with each egg – feel free to expand the discussion of those scriptures or read surrounding scriptures as you feel led with your family.
- Engage in prayer with your children regardless of age throughout the week as you discuss the contents of each egg & scriptures. Depending on their age, consider using the reflection questions and prayer journal section to help guide your discussion and prayer times throughout the week.
- Sometime this week, have your children join you in being still together.
 - Example: Pick a somewhat quiet song; have everyone lay down on the floor together; play the song with no one talking or moving around (as much as possible depending on the age of your children); talk briefly about how they feel after the song ends.
 - Sometimes even a brief period of stillness and quiet can re-center our anxieties, selfishness, personal to-do lists, or disagreements to a place of peace and rest as we remove the focus from ourselves or from the noise that surrounds us daily.

Week 2 (March 31-April 6): **Strength for the Weary: emptying of weariness to receive hope**

Weekly Focus: In this meditation, you will contemplate Isaiah 40. In this text, the author demonstrates how we should come to the Lord with anticipation of renewed strength. It is a chapter full of beautiful reflections of our everlasting God.

Weekly Text: Isaiah 40:28-31

Supplemental Passages: Hebrews 6:9-20

For Practice: before you read Isaiah 40, relax your body by taking three deep breaths. Be still and pray a simple prayer to quiet your mind. Spend **two minutes** in silence.

For Reflection: We all grow weary at times. We may become...physically fatigued, mentally drained, emotionally exhausted and even spiritually lazy. Isaiah wrote, "Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men and women stumble and fall." Sometimes we are very aware of our tiredness, and other times we become so exhausted we become numb to it.

As you begin this meditation, say this prayer: "God, make me aware of my own weariness...weariness in my body, in my mind, in my emotions. Weariness in my spirit, in my relationship with you and my relationships with others. God make me aware."

Now, slowly...inhale deeply and fully...as you exhale, let your body relax. As you slowly inhale and exhale, let your body yield to any weariness...let your mind yield to any weariness. Rest in the arms of the everlasting God.

Our Lord said, "I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint." Repeat that silently in your mind, "I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint..."

As you continue to breathe slowly, think about the Lord refreshing your spirit. And challenge yourself, this week – as the Lord brings it to mind – God's promise will be your mantra: "God will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint"... "God will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint"... "God will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint."

Weekly Prayer:

"Father God, Almighty maker of heaven and earth: set up your kingdom realities in our midst. Make me more like you.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God: have mercy on me, a sinner and empty me of my weariness so that I can receive your hope.

Holy Spirit, breath of the living God: renew me and ignite within me a passion to live humbly for your glory and the sake of the world." Amen.

CHILDREN'S CORNER – week 2

We will open Resurrection Eggs 4, 5, and 6 this week. Feel free to space these out as it makes sense in your family schedule.

EGG 4 = Praying Hands

Scripture focus = Matthew 26:39

EGG 5 = Whip

Scripture focus = Mark 15:15

EGG 6 = Crown of Thorns

Scripture focus = Matthew 27:29

Reflection Questions:

What is weariness? (Consider sharing an example with your children of when you have felt weary & why.)

What is hope? (Share an experience of how you have felt a shift from weariness to hope so that your kids can hear an example of what this looks like in a real-life scenario.)

Help them imagine the weariness Jesus must have felt and how He turned to God for hope and strength.

Weekly Prayer:

Lord, help me to focus on Your love and Your goodness. Please help me learn how to come to You when I'm discouraged, upset, scared, or tired. Help me to trust You to give me hope and strength and to remember that You are always with me.

PRAYER JOURNAL

God, I love you because.....

Today, I need forgiveness for.....

I want to pray for.....

Lord, please help me.....

Thank you for.....

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activities:

- Scripture reading with each egg – feel free to expand the discussion of those scriptures or read surrounding scriptures as you feel led with your family.
- Engage in prayer with your children regardless of age throughout the week as you discuss the contents of each egg & scriptures. Depending on their age, consider using the reflection questions and prayer journal section to help guide your discussion and prayer times throughout the week.
- Sometime this week, have your children join you in being still together.
 - Example: Pick a spot to lay down with eyes closed (indoor or outdoor) with no one talking or moving around (as much as possible depending on the age of your children); set a timer for 1-2 minutes; talk briefly about what they were thinking about during this time. (it may not be dramatic or spiritual – just enjoy listening to the thoughts of your children in stillness and laugh with them if it's funny or crazy! Sometimes we can learn a great deal from the imagination of a child)

Week 3 (April 7-13): **Make Me Clean: emptying of death to receive life**

Weekly Focus: This psalm is traditionally known as a response to some deathly sins in David's life. However, tucked inside of the heaviness of sin are some beautiful lessons on confession, holiness, forgiveness and God's grace.

Weekly Text: Psalm 51

Supplemental Passages: Hebrews 9:11-28

For Practice: Before you read Psalm 51, relax your body by taking three deep breaths. Be still and pray a simple prayer to quiet your mind. Spend **three minutes** in silence.

For Reflection: Psalm 51 was written by David while a particular series of sins were weighing heavy on his mind and heart. You will get more out of this meditation if you do the same. So, think about a specific sin(s) you have committed recently. Do not overlook specific instances of things like pride, lust, envy, greed, gossip, hate, unresolved anger, etc.

David likely believed that no one knew about his sins; but, God revealed them to Nathan. Reflect for a moment about how you would feel if other people knew about the sin that is weighing heavy on your heart. How would you respond?

David wrote, "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow..." Hyssop is a flowering herb with a long stalk...it is mentioned and used in Scripture at the first Passover to spread the blood of the lamb on the top and both sides of the doorframe. This was done so that the angel of death would pass over their house. Imagine that you were an Israelite during this time and you are putting the blood of the lamb on your doorframe...

Another significant moment in Scripture where hyssop is used is when Jesus was hanging on the cross. He said, "I am thirsty..." Imagine you were near the cross and could hear Jesus' request. You watched as vinegar was raised up to his lips in a sponge on a hyssop stalk. "A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of hyssop and lifted it to Jesus' lips..."

Reflect on the imagery of hyssop. David wrote, "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean..." Could he have had in mind the Passover? He believed God could cleanse him of his sin and wash him "...whiter than snow." Think for a moment about what it looks like when everything is covered with brilliant, white snow. Think about how the sun glares off the snow and you have to squint in its radiance. Snow. It was probably the best thing David could imagine for the cleanliness that he desired. But in his confession, he believed God could and would wash him clean. Do you?

Weekly Prayer:

"Father God, Almighty maker of heaven and earth: set up your kingdom realities in our midst. Make me more like you.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God: have mercy on me, a sinner and empty me of my deathly sin so that I can receive your life-giving grace.

Holy Spirit, breath of the living God: renew me and ignite within me a passion to live humbly for your glory and the sake of the world." Amen.

CHILDREN'S CORNER – week 3

We will open Resurrection Eggs 7, 8, and 9 this week. Feel free to space these out as it makes sense in your family schedule.

EGG 7 = Nails

Scripture focus = Matthew 27:31

EGG 8 = Dice

Scripture focus = Matthew 27:35

EGG 9 = Spear

Scripture focus = John 19:33-34

Reflection Questions:

How's your heart today? (Help guide your children in talking about anything that is heavy on their heart – whether that is a hurt, a sin, or a weight. Consider talking about the difference between a weight and a sin.)

What is confession? What is forgiveness? (Consider talking about how our heart heals with bringing hurts, sins, or weights to the light and talking about them to God and with someone we trust.)

Weekly Prayer:

Lord, thank you for loving us so much that You came to earth, lived here, and then chose to walk the path of the cross for us. Thank you for Your overwhelming love and for Your mercy and forgiveness. Help me to have courage to bring anything that's heavy on my heart to You for healing and forgiveness.

PRAYER JOURNAL

God, I love you because..._____

Today, I need forgiveness for..._____

I want to pray for..._____

Lord, please help me..._____

Thank you for..._____

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activities:

- Scripture reading with each egg – feel free to expand the discussion of those scriptures or read surrounding scriptures as you feel led with your family.
- Engage in prayer with your children regardless of age throughout the week as you discuss the contents of each egg & scriptures. Depending on their age, consider using the reflection questions and prayer journal section to help guide your discussion and prayer times throughout the week.
- Sometime this week, have your children join you in being still together.
 - Example: Posture yourself with your children in either a kneeling position or laying on your stomach with palms facing down as a sign of reverence and surrender. Help them say out loud some of the things that may have come up in your discussions about hurts, sins, or weights this week, explaining that the posture of their body can be a reflection of the posture of their heart as they lay these heavy things down at Jesus' feet. Remind them that they are deeply loved – always – not just by you, but by God.

Week 4 (April 14-20): He Has Risen: *emptying of doubt to receive assurance*

Weekly Focus: Welcome to what is commonly known as *Holy Week*...a remembrance and celebration of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. Do your best in this week's devotional to imagine yourself as one of the characters in the story. Perhaps you choose a different person for each day of the week and imagine what this moment in time was like for them. How did they experience the risen Christ and how did Jesus change their life?

Weekly Text: John 20

Supplemental Passages: Hebrews 10:19-25, 35-36

For Practice: Before you read John 20, relax your body by taking three deep breaths. Be still and pray a simple prayer to quiet your mind. Spend **five minutes** in silence.

For Reflection: As you continue to breathe and relax, imagine you are transported back in time...back through the centuries...back to that moment where everything changed. Imagine you are in a beautiful garden. The sun is rising in the east. There is a bit of a chill in the air, and as you look around you see a tomb carved into the hillside. There is an enormous stone covering the opening to the cave. Roman guards stand at the entrance.

How do you feel as you stare at the tomb...knowing all that has happened?

Suddenly, there is a terrifying sound, like thunder but even more powerful. The ground begins to shake violently. As you regain your footing, you look up to see the huge stone rolling away from the entrance to the tomb. As the dust settles, you look closer and notice a person in brilliant white pushing the stone away. The guards have collapsed by utter shock, and the angelic person disappears.

As you stand in wonder of what you just witnessed, you hear voices. A group of women are approaching the garden. You hear them crying and questioning how they will move the stone so they can anoint the body. Notice the women's expressions as they reach the tomb and see the stone rolled away. While the confused women try to figure out what is going on, suddenly two men in clothes that once again gleamed like lightening stood beside them in the tomb. And it is then that you heard the miraculous words, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!"

As you immerse yourself into this story, how are you feeling as you hear these words of resurrection? How does the resurrection of Jesus change your life? Shape it? Challenge it?

Weekly Prayer:

"Father God, Almighty maker of heaven and earth: set up your kingdom realities in our midst. Make me more like you.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God: have mercy on me, a sinner and empty me of my doubt so that I can receive your assurance.

Holy Spirit, breath of the living God: renew me and ignite within me a passion to live humbly for your glory and the sake of the world." Amen.

CHILDREN'S CORNER – week 4

We will open Resurrection Eggs 10, 11, and 12 this week. Feel free to space these out as it makes sense in your family schedule.

EGG 10 = Linen

Scripture focus = Matthew 27:65-66

EGG 11 = Stone

Scripture focus = Matthew 27:59-60

EGG 12 = Empty Tomb

Scripture focus = Matthew 28:5

Reflection Questions:

What does resurrection mean? Pretend you are Mary Magdalene, Peter, or one of the other disciples at the empty tomb – how do you feel?

Do you believe Jesus is alive? Do you believe Jesus is alive in you?

Weekly Prayer:

Lord, please help us when we doubt Your love and goodness. Sometimes it's hard to remember and to believe and to hope and to understand. Help us to have eyes to see You and ears to hear Your voice. Help us to remember truth when we forget. You defeated death and You give us life! We praise Your holy name, forever and ever, and we rejoice that the tomb is empty!

PRAYER JOURNAL

God, I love you because.....

Today, I need forgiveness for.....

I want to pray for.....

Lord, please help me.....

Thank you for.....

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activities:

- Scripture reading with each egg – feel free to expand the discussion of those scriptures or read surrounding scriptures as you feel led with your family.
- Engage in prayer with your children regardless of age throughout the week as you discuss the contents of each egg & scriptures. Depending on their age, consider using the reflection questions and prayer journal section to help guide your discussion and prayer times throughout the week.
- Sometime this week, have your children join you in being still together.
 - Example: Pick a spot outdoors; get comfortable; close your eyes with no one talking or moving around; set a timer for 1-2 minutes; talk briefly about what they heard. Share with them the different ways that you hear from God or see God around you.
- After your time of stillness together, engage in some form of worship together.
 - Examples: dancing to a favorite song together – make up motions if you need to!; saying different names of God out loud together as you jump as high as you can; singing a song together; outside with sidewalk chalk, drawing a picture of how they imagine the glory of God.