

Flourishing in the Joyful Season

Because He Lives!

Easter is a celebration. We rejoice knowing that Jesus died on the cross, but He didn't stay dead. He arose! The tomb was empty. Here are four things that we can rejoice in because Jesus lives:

Dark days will not last. Things looked pretty dark when Jesus was arrested, tried and convicted and killed on a cross. He died and was buried in a tomb. Mary the mother of Jesus, watched as her son, Jesus, was dying on the cross. Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and some of the women wrapped Jesus' body and placed him in a tomb. The women were surprised when on that first Easter morning they went to the tomb and He wasn't there. Because He's alive, we remember that the dark days don't last. Whatever you are going through, whatever pain you're enduring, whatever hurts you're harboring, be assured the tomb was empty.

Nothing is beyond God's power. Jesus died. The Roman soldiers pierced His side with a spear to ensure He was dead. He was placed in a tomb. The tomb was sealed closed, and Roman guards were placed in front of the tomb. But on Sunday the tomb was empty. Jesus was resurrected from the dead by God's power! There is nothing God can't do and nothing is too hard for God. No matter what hard situation you are facing, it isn't bigger or stronger than God.

Hard times are never wasted. Jesus suffered, bled and died for us. He was mocked, beaten and spit upon. He endured physical torture, He suffered thirst. The cross was the ultimate hard time. But Jesus went through all of it for us. He died in our place. He paid the price for our sins. Something good came out of the horrible. God can take the hard, the ugly, and turn into something wonderful and good.

Better days are coming. Death is not the end of the story. Jesus rose again. He defeated the grave. Hebrews 2:14-15 proclaims, *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.* Because Jesus lives, our sin debt has been paid, and if we believe in Christ, we too can have everlasting life. We can look forward in joy to the home in glory that awaits for us. Jesus said this to His disciples before He was crucified: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.* (John 14:2-3). Because He lives, better days are indeed ahead!



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Flourishing in Relationships: Conversation Starters

Here are some great conversation starters as you gather with your friends and family to celebrate Easter.

- ◆ How did you celebrate Easter as a child?
- ◆ Did you ever get a new outfit for Easter? How did you feel? Do you remember the outfit?
- ◆ What is your favorite Easter candy?
- ◆ What does Easter mean to you?
- ◆ What is the best news you received this week? This month?
- ◆ When did you first hear the real Easter story?
- ◆ Who was the first person to tell you about Jesus?
- ◆ What brings you joy?
- ◆ When you are feeling down or sad, what do you do to help you feel joyful?
- ◆ The Easter story is one of sorrow but then one of joy. Tell of a time in your life that started off sad but then turned into joy.

“The devil, darkness and death may swagger and boast, the pangs of life will sting for a while longer, but don’t worry; the forces of evil are breathing their last.. Not to worry... He’s risen!” Charles R. Swindoll

Additional Resources

Check out our website for more resources to help you flourish in the joyful season:

<https://usw-womensministries.org/>

Bible Study: *Living in the Fullness of God*, a Bible study on Ephesians 3:14-19

Devotional: *Planted in Joy*

Craft Idea: *Floral Letter Decoration*

Flourishing Story: Envoy Betsy Martinez shares her story of serving Him joyfully.

Praying the Easter Story

Celebrate the joy of the Easter story all month with these prayer ideas.

Palm Leaf Praises. When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, people in the crowd waved palm leaves and branches as He passed by. Every day this month write on a palm leaf (can be printed from the internet, or simply use green paper) and write a praise for each day. Perhaps display the palm branches all month long.

Nailing our Sins to the Cross. (*This requires a thick piece of wood, nails, hammer and slips of paper*). We are sinners and Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He was nailed to a cross. This month, as you confess your sins to the Lord, write down on the piece of paper the sin you are confessing, and then nail that sin to the cross. Thank Him for the forgiveness of sins He provides.

Go and Tell the Good News. The story of Jesus’s death and resurrection is the greatest news. The tomb being empty that first Easter morning was the most joyous event ever! The woman discovered the tomb was empty and they went and told the disciples. Before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He told the disciples to share the good news with everyone (Mark 16:15). Who are people in your life that need to hear the Good News of Easter? Pray for them daily, and think of ways you can share the good news with them this month. Perhaps invite them to attend church with you on Easter Sunday.



Read the Easter story in all four of the Gospels!

Flourishing in the Word

The most joyous news ever told is Jesus died and rose again! Spend the month of April reading the crucifixion and resurrection accounts of Jesus in all four Gospels.

April 1 Matthew 26:1-35

April 2 Matthew 26:36-75

April 3 Matthew 27:1-23

April 4 Matthew 27:24-66

April 5 Matthew 28:1-20

April 6 Mark 14:1-21

April 7 Mark 14:22-42

April 8 Mark 14:43-52

April 9 Mark 14:53-72

April 10 Mark 15:1-20

April 11 Mark 15:21-47

April 12 Mark 16:1-20

April 13 Luke 22:1-20

April 14 Luke 22:21-46

April 15 Luke 22:47-71

April 16 Luke 23:1-25

April 17 Luke 23:26-56

April 18 Luke 24:1-12

April 19 Luke 24:13-35

April 20 Luke 24:36-53

April 21 John 18:1-18

April 22 John 18:19-32

April 23 John 18:33-40

April 24 John 19:1-15

April 25 John 19:16-27

April 26 John 19:28-42

April 27 John 20:1-18

April 28 John 20:19-30

April 29 John 21:1-14

April 30 John 21:15-25

Flourishing Ideas from the Territory

El Cajon, CA started a DIY Bible study for young adults/working women. They are going through a study independently, and then will meet at the end for Coffee and Conversation at a local coffee shop to discuss what they studied and learned.

El Centro, CA Home League takes an active roll in celebrating the corps youth's birthdays and praying over them. They intentionally support youth fundraisers.

Kaneohe, HI had a virtual book club discussing *Winning the War in Your Mind* by Craig Groeschel.

Oceanside, CA reached out to their community during a one-day event, "Chili for a Cause." They provided chili and fixings with a bottle of water or can of soda for everyone who came and donated canned goods to the food pantry.

Pueblo, CO is doing an inductive Bible study through the Gospel of John.

Redwood City, CA ladies were busy. They made 150 key chains for all those in attendance at the United Meeting for Silicon Valley.

Salt Lake City, UT is doing a study on *Becoming a Woman of Prayer* by Cynthia Heald.

Torrance, CA did a Bible Study from The Daily Grace Co, called, *The Attributes of God*.

Ventura, CA has a monthly Women's Brunch at the corps to get both younger and older women together in one room.

Because He Lives... Promises to Claim

Because He lives, we have the promise of His companionship (Hebrews 13:5)

Because He lives, we have the promise of His comfort (John 14:16)

Because He lives, we have the prestigious position of being God's children (Romans 8:16)

Because He lives, we have the prestigious position of being His heir (Romans 8:17)

Because He lives, we have power over sin (Romans 8:37b)

Because He lives, we have purpose (Ephesians 2:10)



Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future, and life is worth the living just because He lives. Bill Gaither

The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said....” Matthew 28:5-6



Flourishing Fun in April

1. Buy tulips or daffodils and set them by your sink for a happy little reminder that spring is here!
2. Celebrate Easter by attending church. Not just Easter Sunday, but attend a Holy Week observance as well.
3. Do some spring cleaning.
4. Find a rainbow or splash in puddles.
5. Give an Easter gift to someone; be sure to include the real meaning of Easter.
6. Go on a walk and admire all the flowers that are blooming.
7. Enjoy a picnic in the warm sunshine.
8. Make a recipe using a spring vegetable or perhaps a lemony dessert.
9. Enjoy the sunshine and blow some bubbles.
10. Visit a museum.