

The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly stone or concrete, with a white cloth and a brown bag. The text is overlaid on this background.

JUST

AS

HE

SAID

RESOURCES AND REFLECTIONS
ON THE RESURRECTION
BY MARY HOLLOMAN



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4 WAYS TO
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01

"Uuuugh, I'm running out of time to put together the kids' Easter baskets, I've got to think of something QUICK!"

The frazzled mother rushed past me with impressive speed. She whizzed down the aisle at the Target Dollar Spot, phone flattened against her face. She then proceeded to explain to the unlucky recipient of her phone call the reason why she didn't have time for such a hassle.

Somewhere along the way, Easter has become another stressful holiday for many parents. Expectations of overflowing Easter baskets, beautiful Sunday outfits, and gourmet meals threaten to squash the true joy from this holiday. None of these things are bad in themselves but, like any good gift, they can create blind spots so that we don't see what's most important.

Easter should be special. But it also shouldn't be another day

”we dread because of self-imposed, chocolate-covered obligations.

Every family is unique, so your Easter celebration will look different than others—and that’s okay! Here are 4 simple, low stress ideas you can use to make your Easter special and meaningful as you celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1. Read the Easter Story. *God’s word promises that it is powerful and effective (2 Timothy 3:16). When we read Scripture out loud as a family, we can know and trust that the Holy Spirit is working. So even if you have a teenager rolling his eyes or a toddler climbing your shoulders, take the time to intentionally read the account of Jesus’ death and resurrection together. God will honor your faithfulness, and maybe even open doors for further conversation with your children about our need for a Savior.*

2. Read a Picture Book. *This is a great option for families with both younger and older children. Picture books are*

powerful because they communicate big truths in simple ways. Both words and illustrations work together to put old stories in a new light. Choose a story and plan a time to read together as a family. It could be before bedtime, around the dinner table, or in the backyard. Here's a short list of wonderful books that focus either specifically on Easter or on God's rescue and redemption of humanity:

- *The Garden, the Curtain, and the Cross* by Carl Laferton
- *That Grand Easter Day* by Jill Roman Lord
- *Goodbye to Goodbyes* by Lauren Chandler
- *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd Jones
- *The Quiet Crazy Easter Day* by Jill Roman Lord

3. **Use Resurrection Eggs.** This is a simple but very effective tool for sharing the gospel message at Easter, and it's one that children love. There are Resurrection Egg Kits out there for purchase, but all you really need are a dozen plastic egg (hit up the Dollar Store or Walmart), 12 scraps of paper, and a few items you'll have lying around your house or your yard. You'll label the eggs 1 through 12, and

in each egg you put a slip of paper with a Scripture verse along with an object that tells a portion of the Easter story. (For example, in one egg you might put a nickel, along with Scripture about how Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.)

You can even turn this into an Easter egg hunt; once your children find all the eggs, have them put the eggs in order and open one at a time as you walk through the story. You can find a whole list of free printable Resurrection Egg downloads along with instructions on a Google or Pinterest search.

- 4. Think Strategically About Easter Baskets.** Every family is different; some thrive on putting together Easter baskets, while others opt to forego them as a way to lessen the stress. If you choose to use Easter baskets, make a point to view them as a tool for furthering the gospel within your home. That might look like keeping things simple and avoiding extravagant gifts that center the focus on

ourselves rather than Christ. It might look like very purposeful gifts, such as a devotional book or a new Bible. It might even look like working with your children to create small gift baskets for neighbors as a way to share the gospel. Find what works best for your family in this season, and go for it.

The Greatest Story

Singer/songwriter and author Andrew Peterson said, “If you want a child to know the truth, tell him the truth. If you want a child to love the truth, tell him a story.”

The story of God’s rescue of mankind through Jesus’ perfect life, death, and resurrection is the greatest story ever told. When we tell this story every day, at every opportunity, we invite our children into that story with us—and pray God fills their hearts with love for the Author.

02

THE LONGEST
NIGHT OF MY
LIFE

02

Weeping may last for the night.

Some days it feels like the longest night of my life.

I miss my children today—the ones I haven't met yet. I'd hoped these days would look different, that they would include a chubby set of twins, their eyes following the zigzag patterns run by their older siblings.

I've missed the kicks and rolls I would have felt if our fifth child were still here and only a few months from her due date.

I wish things were different.

I know I'm not the only one. Many people are hurting today. Our world is groaning under the weight of a pandemic that's had its way with us. Much has been lost, broken, or damaged. There is much to grieve. There is much to weep over.

The night is long.

I think of the women who visited the tomb of Jesus after his death. I think of the anguish that must have ripped through their hearts as they watched him breathe his last on the cross. Those soul-crushing hours after his death must have been excruciating. What was it like when they finally rested their heads on their pillows that evening? Could they sleep? Could they breathe? Did they question everything?

It must have felt like the longest night.

But on the third day, as the women stared at that empty tomb, an angel spoke these words:

“He is not here, he has risen, just as he said.”

Just as he said.

Can you hear the gentle truth, the weight of meaning packed

packed into those four words?

What might that angel have said if he had elaborated?

***Precious women, he's not here—he's alive, just like he said!
You look shocked, you look confused, you look like you
believe everything good in your life is lost. You look like you
have no hope, no future, no anchor. But your Savior keeps
his promises. He always has, and he always will. He told you
death wouldn't win. He told you weeping would last for the
night—maybe even the longest night of your life—but that joy
would come. And it has! Jesus Christ is the same yesterday,
today, and forever, and when he says something will happen,
there is nothing—no height, no depth, no tragedy, no
pandemic, no grief, no loss, no death—that will stop or undo
his word.***

*The question of Why is relentless, and in my darkest
moments I find myself looking to my pain for the answers to
hard questions instead of to the One who keeps all his*

promises and is trustworthy.

If he's trustworthy, I don't need to know why. Because I already know him.

And he is good.

I miss my children today. But tomorrow—and every day—we celebrate Easter, a day when Jesus did the unthinkable and rendered death defeated. The moment his heart began beating again, the doors of heaven swung wide open to all who believe. Death did not have the last word for him, and it doesn't have to for us, either.

I miss my children today. But because of Jesus, one day I'll see them and know them. Our sin separates us from God, but the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the bridge that makes a way for us.

And if you are walking through the longest night of your life

right now, that promise can be true for you, too.

Weeping may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning.

Because he has risen.

Just as he said.

03

DEATH,
WHERE IS
YOUR
STING?

03

We had reached the “Bible story” portion of my two-year-old’s bedtime routine. An evening of freedom was mere minutes away, yet I sat next to Benjamin frozen, unable to put two words together, trying to will away the painful and inevitable knot that always grows in my throat whenever I attempt to hold back tears.

Less than 24 hours earlier, my granddaddy had passed away.

As I sat next to my son in silence, I felt overwhelmed by the unnaturalness of death. I knew, deep in my heart, that this was not how things should be. Surely death was not normal, not in the original plan or design for human life. The finality and the very real sting of it created such sorrow in my heart I could almost taste it. And the pain it brought to my family was almost more than I could bear.

Sometimes, in the midst of sorrow, we can forget about the truths that we’ve always clung to, that have always given us hope.

And sometimes God graciously reminds us of those truths through the innocent, pure eyes of a small child.

Our Bible story for that night happened to be the crucifixion of Jesus—which is why the large knot was in my throat. The reality and ugliness of death seemed to press in all around me, making it harder to breathe. My granddaddy was gone. And the story in my hands reminded me that my savior had also experienced the horribleness of death.

And that's when the floodgates opened, I dropped my head into my hands, and wept.

Benjamin had been uncharacteristically still and quiet during all this. My head still in my hands, I could feel Benjamin reaching for his storybook Bible and pulling it out of my lap. When I lifted my tear-stained face, Benjamin was looking back at me and pointing at the page in front of him. The smile spreading across his face seemed inappropriate given the picture portraying Christ's death.

“Jesus is alive again!” he exclaimed, and then began flipping through the pages and jabbering about only he knew what.

I can only imagine the unbearable pain, sadness, and disillusionment that those who loved and walked with Jesus felt in the days after his death. The man they had followed and placed their trust in was gone, leaving them lost and searching for purpose. This should not be, they must have thought. This is not how it was supposed to end.

Praise God, that’s not how it ended. Not at all.

That night during story time, Benjamin was repeating what his dad and I had already told him again and again: that Jesus did not stay dead. The strength of death proved powerless compared to the omnipotent words of a heavenly Father who called his beloved son back to life.

Yes, Jesus’ death was sorrowful. But the sorrow was for only a moment. And Christ’s resurrection proved once and for all

that both sin and death had no mastery over him—not then, not now, not ever.

And as I sat next to my son, silently and appropriately grieving, a sharp ray of hope pierced through my sorrow-induced forgetfulness.

My granddaddy knew Jesus. He knew of Christ's death and resurrection and had entered into a relationship with him many years ago. He knew what I also knew but had momentarily forgotten in the midst of grief: that Christ's victory over death was also a victory for us who believe. Because of Jesus, those who follow him need not stay lost in the sorrow of death. To know Christ is to have the hope of an eternity secured with him.

Does this reality make the pain of separation disappear? Absolutely not. But the reality and hope that this separation is temporary enables me to say, through tears:

Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? (1 Corinthians 15:55)

In the words of my two-year-old: Jesus is alive again. And he has rendered death defeated.

Therein lies our hope. And this hope is more than enough.

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