



2025 Easter Offering

Jesus' Relentless Love

**For the Joy Set Before Him
He Endured the Cross**

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Executive Director of Evangelical Friends Mission**



**EVANGELICAL
FRIENDS MISSION**

Holy Week carries deep significance for Jesus' followers. It is in this week that we remember Christ's suffering and celebrate his resurrection. We hope that by diving into the depths of Jesus' relentless love for the world and for each of us that we will experience a greater work of God in our lives and around the world.

Jesus as the Suffering Servant is the theme of these devotional prompts – a title the prophet Isaiah emphasized. New Testament writers picked up on this theme, bringing color and depth to Isaiah's vision. Jesus' sufferings capture a radical devotion to obedience planted deep in the assurance that he is God's beloved son. The greatest expression of this love is found in Jesus' life, crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension. Christ's suffering opens the door for the world to experience God's endless love. This love compels Christ's followers into the joy of engaging in the Great Commission. In a word, these scriptures inspire us to experience God's love more fully.

The format emphasizes discerning prayer and scripture reading and is designed to aid each participant to dig deep into the soil of Jesus' suffering. The biblical passages are short and meant to be read three times during each sitting. This allows for a careful reading, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us into greater awareness of its content. Next, we seek God's insight for our life and in the end, identify a point of practical application. Each day also includes brief notes to prompt deeper reflection. Notice, there is space to write any of your insights and applications. Recording our observations, insights and applications plants the ideas deeper into our souls, helping them to fully integrate into our lives. Scribbling even a phrase or two is usually beneficial.

You might like to engage in this process with a group because it is mutually beneficial to share our experience. The support of other Christians, demonstrated through encouragement and accountability, allows us to follow Jesus' instructions more effectively. Obedience leads to integration. This integration releases us into the abundant life Jesus calls us to enjoy.

The small group experience could revolve around sharing three simple questions: What insights did you receive from your reading? How might you put those insights into practice in everyday life? And how can we support you – prayer, encouragement, accountability? Spiritual growth thrives in this kind of supportive group.

Finally, you received a copy of this devotional guide because you have supported Jesus' relentless love through the work of Evangelical Friends Mission. We offer it as a gift, grateful for your support.

I offer these thoughts, not out of a wealth of experience with hardship, but rather as an invitation to explore the biblical invitation to participate in Christ's suffering. I offer them not as an expert, but rather as a friend.



Stan Leach
Executive Director

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Palm Sunday:

Suffering and Redemption

Short Prayer: Jesus, open my heart to what it means to know the fellowship of sharing in your sufferings.

Read for Content: (What does it say?) Philippians 3:10-11

Read for Insight: (What does it mean?)

Jesus' Suffering: Paul (crazily?) writes that he wants to share in the fellowship of Jesus' sufferings. This is the context of experientially knowing Christ. To know Christ? That request is easy to understand. Who wouldn't want to know Christ and his love more deeply? To know the power of the resurrection? Of course. Anyone would be excited about tapping into that resource. However, to share in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings? Um, do I really want that?

Paul recognizes that there is something helpful in sharing in the fellowship of Jesus' sufferings. Somehow, to suffer as Jesus suffered – for the sake of the kingdom and for the sake of reconciled relationships – allows us to experience him and his love more fully. To know him in the most difficult moments of life allows Christ's followers to give him free reign more readily in life. They become more like him. This life is so beautiful that enduring hardship on Christ's behalf is a way of life worth pursuing!

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Sharing in Jesus' Suffering: We live in a consumeristic society that emphasizes (idolizes?) comfort, convenience, safety and security. To propose that suffering is good is crazy talk. And yet, Jesus and his followers viewed suffering not only as inevitable, but when engaged as an act of faithfulness to God's kingdom, initiates a mysterious process that displays the depths of God's love for us. We grow to know Christ and his love, salvation, redemption and power more fully. Suffering ushers us into a penetrating awareness of God's presence and what we experience is his infinite love. It purifies our character and fills us with love. We find that our suffering, while arduous, is redeemed for good!

Possible Application: Commit your suffering to Jesus. Allow his Presence to comfort you.

Monday:

Suffering and Humility

Short Prayer: Help me to see the connections between humility, service, sacrifice and suffering.

Read for Content: (What does it say?) Philippians 2:6-8, Isaiah 42:1

Read for Insight: (What does it mean?)

Jesus' Suffering: Jesus is often referred to as the suffering servant. This title, servant, is one he was fully comfortable using. This title flows from a decision that led to his move from heaven to earth. Jesus chose humility over comfort, convenience, safety, and security. As King of Heaven, He enjoyed all those things and more to the infinite degree. Yet as an expression of immeasurable love for his father, for people, for the kingdom and for creation, he abdicated his royal title and answered to that of "servant."

As an expression of absolute dependence, he emptied himself of all his rights and entitlements. Jesus' refrain then was, "To love is to serve." As a servant, he followed the path laid out by his father, even when it led him into cruel hardship. Clearly, his suffering is not the end of the story. However, it is just as clear that Jesus understood that to endure suffering, the pain had to be about something and someone greater than himself. It had to be about the Father and love and salvation and redemption and healing and rescue and beauty and reconciliation. It was about establishing God's kingdom in the hearts of everyone.

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Sharing in Jesus' Suffering: Full disclosure, to fully appreciate the suffering servant, it makes sense to think about the nature of Jesus' suffering. In the broadest sense, it means to endure hardship for the establishment of God's kingdom and for the benefit of others. Of course, this can include ridicule, oppression and persecution. But it might also describe other kinds of suffering – sickness, lack, grief, danger, despair. All examples of suffering cannot be named, nor can they be quantified. What is the underlying principle of Jesus' example? Empty ourselves of preconceived perspectives on our rights and entitlements and approach any hardship with humility, seeking to obey the Father and an awareness of how

Tuesday:

Suffering and Hope

Short Prayer: Show me your character.

Read for Content: (What does it say?) Isaiah 42:1-4

Read for Insight: (What does it mean?)

Jesus' Suffering: Jesus suffers to alleviate the cause of suffering and provide a balm for those who suffer.

A servant is tasked with announcing, living out and ushering in the kingdom of God. A part of this assignment requires him to confront the root cause of suffering - sin. Isaiah calls this "bringing forth justice." It is a world where sin has no dominion. Of course, this means making his life an offering for all sin (see Isaiah 53:10).

There might be a multitude of ways to undo the damage of sin in the world. Cover the world in water. Of course, that method failed. Cover the world in fire? That would hurt. Humans are fragile. Justice requires payment. Love recognizes humans are fragile. There must be a manner to usher in the kingdom of God and the justice that accompanies it without executing the very people this kingdom is supposed to serve. Isaiah says there is a way.

The suffering servant comes in a way that is aware of human brokenness and is determined to execute justice in a way that does not break them but heals them. This servant perfectly balances gentleness and righteousness, grace and truth, mercy and justice. This servant wields the scepter of a king and anoints the oil of a healer.

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Sharing in Jesus' Suffering: With the best of intentions, we strive to serve. We work to live rightly. We desperately want to love as he loves. Yet we often fail. We are broken, just like those we serve. We are finite. Our pride undermines our good intentions.

Yet, there is hope. Jesus is aware of our suffering, our weakness, our hurt, our insecurities. He is aware of the inequity around us as well as the inequity we dispense. He is already at work to deliver us.

Wednesday:

Suffering and Trust

Short Prayer: Teach me to understand your goodness, power and love in the face of suffering.

Read for Content: (What does it say?) Isaiah 50:4-9, I Peter 2:23

Read for Insight: (What does it mean?)

Jesus' Suffering: There is a drumbeat pulsing through all Jesus' suffering: "The Sovereign Lord helps me!" Jesus was so convinced of this truth that he even offered himself up to the suffering. He decided that God's ever-present help was not measured by absence of suffering but by the Presence of God in the midst of the suffering. Jesus, while suffering, recognized that "God's got this." There was an expectation that God would, in the end, rectify the wrong, establish the truth and redeem the suffering. He resolved to endure, trusting the Lord to make it right.

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Sharing in Jesus' Suffering: To suffer for the sake of the kingdom, requires a level of vulnerability and trust. Hardship brings pain. In our sacrifice, even when it goes unrecognized, we trust the Lord to make it right.

Our sacrifice is not always recognized as helpful. As we endure hardship for the benefit of God's kingdom and the good of others, there may be opposition from those who prefer to pursue their own agendas. The pushback doesn't always come only from others. Sometimes, our less noble selves will entertain that selfish impulse that says, "I'm gonna do what's best for me." Certainly, the very culture we live in builds in a resistance to God's kingdom. All these responses cause (at least) discomfort. In many cases, our commitment to Christ leads to outright suffering.

It is in this moment when we most reveal our understanding of who God is. Is he good, powerful and loving? If we are skeptical, we choose to short-circuit our suffering. If we affirm God as good, powerful and loving, we entrust ourselves to him, confident that he will make all things right. Our thoughts, words and actions then all align with our conviction that indeed, "God's got this!"

Maundy Thursday:

Suffering and Reconciliation

Short Prayer: Jesus, teach me to follow your example of reconciliation with humility and grace.

Read for Content: (What does it say?) Romans 5:9-11, Isaiah 53:2-4

Read for Insight: (What does it mean?)

Jesus' Suffering: Jesus was acquainted with grief. He experienced hardship! He emptied himself, renouncing all rights and entitlements and embraced a life of suffering. He embarked upon this journey because it would bridge a gap of enmity between humans and God. Once this bridge was built, the gap between humans (individuals, groups, even cultures) could be bridged as well.

Certainly, this could have been Jesus' approach - "I've done nothing wrong. As a matter of fact, I have acted perfectly. Let them take the first step." Instead, bucking a human sense of rightness, Jesus took the first step. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Jesus knew, in reconciliation, someone has to take the first step. While fairness dictated that someone else should initiate reconciliation, Jesus did it himself. In the perspective of eternity, it's more important to make right than to be right.

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Sharing in Jesus' Suffering: Jesus was deeply committed to reconciliation and when we suffer for the sake of reconciliation, we understand. When we, like Jesus, become willing to absorb wrongs done to us, we live into that same commitment to reconciliation. For the sake of relationships, we forgive our debtors.

This gets tough when we have (or perceive ourselves to have) done nothing wrong. We protest, "Why should I ask forgiveness. Let them take the first step!" Upon honest reflection, there are edges to any relationship that suggest our need to get humble if we are willing to take them. What if we were to lead in reconciliation? What if we ventured into broken relationships with humility, acknowledging that we are fallible? Or, what if we were to ask others how we may have unknowingly wronged them? Or we concede that our spirit was a bit proud or even stubborn. What

Good Friday:

Suffering and Transformation

Short Prayer: May I understand the depth and significance of your suffering!

Read for Content: (What does it say?) Isaiah 53:1-10

Read for Insight: (What does it mean?)

Jesus' Suffering: At some point in his crucifixion, the sin of the whole world fell upon Jesus. Into this sinless soul, the force of evil assaulted his body. As life poured out of him, the sin of every person (those who lived in the past, the present, the future) cascaded into Jesus. Perhaps even more than the physical suffering, this weight of wickedness crushed his spirit. The suffocating darkness was more than his body could bear.

However, as with every lethal parasite, the death of the host leads to the death of the parasite. Sin's power perished with Christ's final gasp. Jesus' suffering and death released the deepest (mysterious) authority of the kingdom – authority to forgive sin.

Jesus' decision to humble himself leads to the ultimate act of sacrificial service. His suffering and death transformed the course of history.

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Sharing in Jesus' Suffering: This is one thing our suffering cannot and need not do - pay the price for sin. Only Jesus' suffering accomplished that. We do well to acknowledge that our sin contributed to his suffering. However, (Praise the Lord!) we share the fruits of his suffering – forgiveness, pronounced innocent before God, and given a clean conscience. We live a life that is set free from the law of sin and death.

The course of your life is transformed.

Possible Application: Remember the broken body and the shed blood.

Short Prayer: The depth of your suffering and the significance of your suffering is unimaginable to me. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Saturday:

Suffering and Power

Short Prayer: Give me a deeper understanding of the role of suffering in releasing the power of love.

Read for Context: (What does it say?) Isaiah 53: 11-12

Read for Insight: (What does it mean?)

Jesus' Suffering: Suffering is never the endgame. When Jesus engaged in his sacrificial service it was the embodiment of love expressed through suffering for the sake of the kingdom and the benefit of others. The power of this truth is easily forgotten.

Just as great amounts of nuclear energy are released when an atom splits, so unlimited quantities of love are released through sacrificial service. This love produces an energy so potent that it literally reanimates what is dead. Jesus' suffering and death – his sacrificial service – not only paid a price for sin, it unleashed a power so potent that it infuses life into death. Death has no victory now. This is the power of the resurrection – love unleashed!

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Sharing in Jesus' Suffering: Suffering is never the endgame for us. There is a future. Just as we share in the fellowship of Jesus' sufferings, we share in Jesus' victory. This victory is embodied in the power of the resurrection. That power we experience is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead. This power – the power of love released by sacrificial service and reflected in our suffering – is literally God's love poured into us and into the lives of others. As we are faithful to suffer, the life of the kingdom is ushered in and lived out in the world around us. Our suffering is redeemed by love. This is the power of the resurrection. This is love unleashed!

Possible Application: Love your neighbor today, knowing your service is a demonstration of the power of the resurrection.

Short Prayer: May I know the power of your resurrection!

Easter Sunday:

Suffering and Life

Short Prayer: Teach me how your suffering releases me to the best life!

Read for Context: (What does it say?) Revelation 1:5-6

Read for Insight: (What does it mean?)

Jesus' Suffering: Jesus loves us and suffered in order to free us from our sins. We are also made into a kingdom of priests – a people who serve God by serving others so that they connect Christ's and his love. In fact, this humble and gentle self-sacrificing Savior – the Lamb – has become the absolute Lord who deserves and receives unbridled worship. He is worthy of being adored because of his glory – the incarnated expression of love. He is worthy of being adored for the infinite exercise of his power – selfless, sacrificial service.

His suffering has been transfigured into glory and power. His people have been transformed into priests who worship and serve. They have become exactly what they were designed to be – a people who are loved and empowered to live out a purpose that begins today and stretches into eternity.

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Sharing in Jesus' Suffering: When we suffer in the process of following Jesus, we find meaning to our suffering. This is where we meet our Servant King in worship. He is worthy of worship because he is the gentle, self-sacrificing Savior who loves us and shepherds us into his presence even in the midst of our suffering. In these moments, his presence becomes a precious experience for us. Life (even abundant life) touches our core. We are left with worship.

We suffer as a part of a bigger redemptive process. Our suffering allows us to step into the pain of others, not with sugary platitudes, but with a profound sense of empathy and care and grace. We are true priests – people who make it easier for others to connect to the deep love of God. This is the life we were meant to live. It is a life full of purpose. It is the life Jesus promised us – abundant.

The Monday After: Suffering and Eternity

Short Prayer: Teach me to join with global redemption.

Read for Context: (What does it say?) Revelation 5:11-14

Read for Insight: (What does it mean?)

Jesus' Suffering: Christ's suffering and his victory is global. Revelation 5 provides a picture of the future. Certainly, we ought to recognize ourselves in the circle of worship. But our eyes are drawn to all the others around us – people representing every nation, every language, every tribe, every people group. In that moment, we recognize that God's love and Jesus' sacrifice was so great that it could not be contained by only a small representation from one sector of humanity. Christ's suffering and resurrection is meant for everyone in every group and sub-group in the world. Every one of them worshipping the Lamb who suffered and now sits enthroned in heaven. Everyone at Jesus' feet proclaiming his glory, his power, his love.

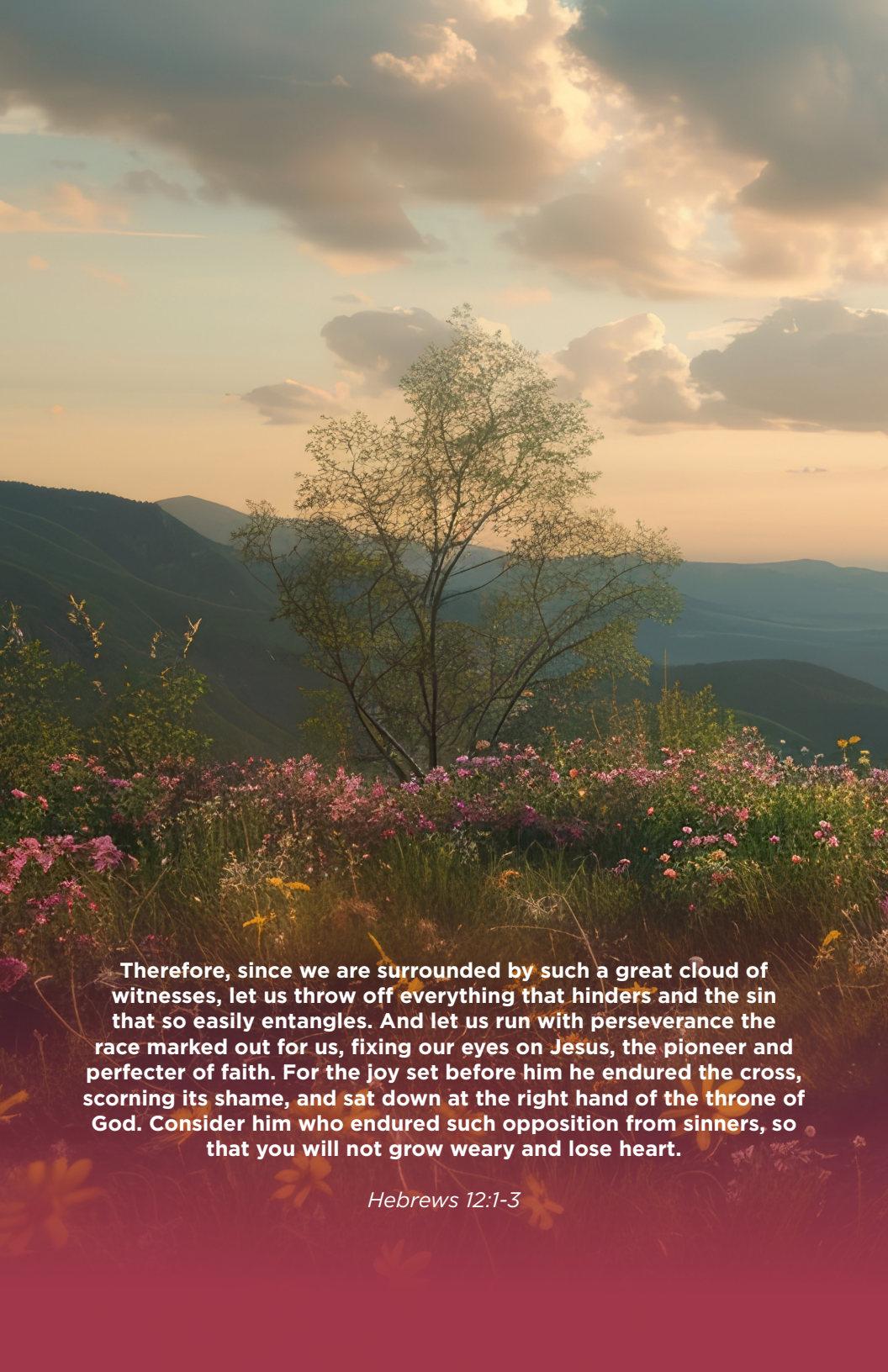
Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Sharing in Jesus' Suffering: One part of our purpose as priests in Christ's kingdom is to make sure that his love is shared around the world. We pray for those that don't yet know Christ. We financially send those who are called to carry this message. Some of us will go.

Evangelical Friends Mission serves as a sending organization, dedicated to making sure this message is shared around the world. Our desire is to help you become a part of this amazing opportunity, given by Jesus to the church – to make disciples around the world.

As we pray, give and go, we understand that supporting disciple-making around the world involves sacrifice on our part. We sacrifice time in order to pray. We sacrifice financially in order to send. We sacrifice comfort and stability when we go (or when we send our daughters, sons and friends).

However, there is a deeper reality in this. We embrace that we are a part of a worldwide movement of God's love. Certainly, there are



Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Afterward:

We are grateful to the Lord for all of this. Generous support from God's people is fueling this progress. This Easter season, we invite you to join us in celebrating and advancing Jesus' relentless love. If the Lord impresses upon you to financially support EFM, you can give:

- Online at **<http://friendsmission.com/easter>** or by scanning the QR code below.
- By credit card over the phone at **303-421-8100**.
- By mailing a check to **PO Box 771139, Wichita, KS 67277**.

Please make sure to designate your giving to the 2025 Easter Offering.



We would also love your feedback. If you are willing to share the impact of these devotional exercises, please email **stan@friendsmission.com**.

Here are a few additional resources you might find helpful.

- *Disciple-Making: Simple as 1,2,3, Infinity* provides a short basic approach to disciple-making that is accessible to anyone and can be utilized in any circumstance. Download at **<http://bitly.ws/on7r>**.
- Lectio 365 is a daily devotional app that follows a similar approach to that used in "Jesus' Relentless Love." Find it at your app store.
- Join our monthly Luke 10:2 Prayer Gathering. Sign up at **<https://friendsmission.com/five-year-goal-pray>**.



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