



# ***The Holy Week in Lockdown***

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**REFLECTING ON  
THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION  
DURING A PANDEMIC**

*As our whole world is consumed by a novel coronavirus and the fear and suffering it has brought to millions of people, we enter the final week of the Lenten season. This is “Holy Week”—the week when we remember Jesus’ last week of life on earth, his death on the cross, and his resurrection to life on Easter Sunday.*

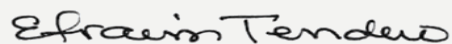
*These were the darkest days in Jesus’ life, yet he gave comfort and hope to his fearful disciples. Then, to their shock, he died. But what appeared to be a failure and a curse from God turned into the greatest victory as Jesus rose to life!*

*How can we apply what happened two thousand years ago to our lives today? How can we find hope and encouragement in a world overrun by uncertainty and fear?*

*We have prepared a brief devotional for each day from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday (April 5–12), following the Gospel of John from chapter 12 to chapter 20. Each devotional connects an element of what Jesus said or did to the current crisis and includes a few questions for you to reflect on or discuss with friends or family. Each day also offers a brief look at what is happening in different parts of the world as believers and churches respond to the pandemic in various ways. We will also be posting short videos on our Facebook page ([fb.com/worldea](https://fb.com/worldea)) that will be a great way for you to start the devotional.*

*We encourage you to spend a few minutes each day with this guide. We trust that it will give you a new perspective on the current situation. May it be enriching to you, may it give you hope and strength, and most of all, may it bring you closer to God!*

*Sincerely,*



*Bp Efraim Tendaro  
Secretary General / CEO  
World Evangelical Alliance*

## **How to use it?**

- 1) Check out the daily video on *Facebook: [fb.com/worlddea](https://www.facebook.com/worlddea)*
- 2) Then start with the Bible reading. If you do not have a Bible on hand, just Google “online Bible” or download a Bible app to your phone. Go to the book of John (the fourth book in the New Testament) and start in chapter 12.
- 3) After reading the passage, read through the devotional and then the story.
- 4) Finally, read the reflection questions. You can think about (and act on) them on your own or discuss them with others.

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# Believe in the light!

## TODAY'S READING: JOHN 12:1-50

Today, people all over the world are gripped by anxiety and fear. Fear of being infected by the coronavirus, fear of losing a loved one, fear of losing their job and the resulting financial suffering. Daily news updates paint a bleak picture of increasing infections and deaths, and hope for a vaccine seems far away.

In this passage, Jesus was facing the darkest moment of his life. He entered Jerusalem knowing that these would be his last days on earth. Darkness was closing in as religious leaders plotted to kill him and his disciples still did not understand what was about to happen (verse 16), yet Jesus fully and unshakingly trusted in God. He was the light that the darkness could not overcome.

In the midst of the darkness of the pandemic today, we are called to be a light bringing hope, comfort and peace to the lives of many.



### Happening Now:

Churches and individual believers all around the world are stepping up to support those in need through prayer and in very practical ways, like shopping for their neighbors, distributing medicines to the elderly, offering a hotline where people can call if they want to talk to someone, or providing practical tips and tools for the many families confined to their homes.

### Have You Thought About...

- Is there an opportunity for you to reach out to someone and share the hope you have in Christ?
- How could you respond to your neighbor, friend or colleague who may be in fear right now?
- Jesus says we can be a light by doing good deeds for others (Matthew 5:14-16).  
What can you do today to let your light shine?

# Love One Another!

## TODAY'S READING: JOHN 13:1-38

Jesus washing his disciples' feet is among the best-known scenes in the Gospels. The first verse captures the essence of the chapter: "he loved them to the end." Washing guests' feet was a task usually assigned to slaves, but Jesus modeled what it meant for him to lower himself and humbly serve his followers by washing the dusty feet of his twelve disciples. "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet," he says. In verses 34-35 he adds, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

At this time when millions of people are confined to their homes and have to live with each other 24 hours a day, remaining loving and kind at all times becomes a challenge. When Jesus used the words, "as I have loved you," he reminded the disciples that they had received love first, and that with this love they should love others. When we remember the love we have received from God and others, we are strengthened and our hearts are renewed, so that we can extend grace and love to those around us.



### Happening Now:

Churches in Argentina are collaborating with the government and health organizations by opening their buildings as special hospitals at this time of increased need. They also help to disseminate medicine for the vulnerable and offer many other practical services to their communities as an expression of love to those around them.

### Have You Thought About...

- Try to remember a moment where you felt loved by God or by others around you. How about saying a prayer of gratitude to God right now?
- Do you find it difficult to love those who are around you these days? If you have fallen short of loving them as Christ has loved you, it may be helpful to ask for forgiveness and reconcile. This is also an expression of love.
- People are created to love and be loved. At this time when anxiety and fear abound, how could you express your love to someone today in words and deeds?

## Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled! Remain in My Love!

### TODAY'S READING: JOHN 14 AND 15

Even though Jesus knows that he—and not the disciples—will soon face the suffering of the cross, he is the one comforting his disciples in these chapters, telling them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (14:1). He is not concerned about himself but fully focused on his disciples’ spiritual and emotional well-being, comforting them in their distress. Later in the passage he says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (14:27).

The world news does not give us hope or peace at this time; instead, it can make us feel anxious and afraid as we hear about the spread of a pandemic across every region of the world. But Jesus gives us a peace that the world cannot give. In chapter 15, he uses the image of the vine and the branches and says, “Remain in my love!” Remaining in him—spending time in the Word of God and in prayer—is necessary so that we can bear fruit. What fruit? Galatians 5:22–23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**” All these appear increasingly in our lives as we rely on Jesus Christ and spend time in God’s Word, the Bible. Not only does the fruit of the Spirit show up despite difficult circumstances, but it is especially revealed in our lives at times like these.



### Happening Now:

People in more developed regions of the world are implementing “social distancing” measures and isolating themselves at home. But in many parts of the world, such as the slums of large Global South cities or refugee camps in Africa and the Middle East, social distancing is impossible and water for washing hands is not readily available. Churches and Christian relief organizations are among those reaching out to these struggling areas. Would you offer a prayer for them right now, asking God to give them comfort, strength and hope today?

### Have You Thought About...

- It is important to stay informed and know how the current situation is developing, but following the news constantly may increase our anxiety. Do you spend as much time reading the Bible and in prayer as you spend reading the news?
- Are you seeing the fruit of the Spirit in your life? Do others see it as well? The more time you spend reading in the Bible, the more you will grow in love, joy, peace and all the expressions of the fruit of the Spirit.
- Whom could you reach out to today to give comfort and assurance? Even small words of encouragement or simply a listening ear can strengthen someone in such a time as this.

## Let Them Be One!

### TODAY'S READING: JOHN 16 AND 17

After explaining the work of the Holy Spirit and reminding the disciples that their grief will turn into joy, Jesus then looked toward heaven and prayed for them (John 17:1). This was the last prayer that Jesus would share with his disciples before his arrest, so he emphasized his greatest concerns regarding the time when he would no longer be with them physically. In verses 20–24, he emphasizes the importance of the unity of believers: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, **that all of them may be one**, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so **that the world may believe** that you have sent me.”

There are reportedly more than 40,000 denominations in the world today, and many people are critical of the Christian faith because of divisions among believers. God has created us in beautifully diverse ways, but it is not always easy to be united in diversity. It has been very encouraging to see churches come together across denominational lines and geographic boundaries during this pandemic, through joint prayer initiatives and collaborative approaches to reaching those in need. In this unity, the world can see the love of God revealed today.



### Happening Now:

Evangelical churches of diverse backgrounds in Italy have come together as never before in prayer and common concern for their suffering nation. The same can be said of a recent 12-hour online prayer initiative in New Zealand. The entire continent of Latin America had a joint day of prayer, and many more stories could be told of pastors, church leaders and individuals praying and working together in their neighborhoods, cities and nations.

### Have You Thought About...

- Jesus prayed for unity not just for unity's sake, but so that the world may see and believe in him. If unity is so important to help people find Christ, why do we find it so difficult sometimes to be united as followers of Jesus?
- What obstacles do you experience with regard to uniting with other believers? Are these essential matters for our faith, or are they related to differences in tradition or style of worship?
- How could your words and deeds today contribute to unity, starting in your own household?



Visit [worldea.org/devotional](http://worldea.org/devotional) for the next devotional!