



Living Intentionally During Holy Week

We strongly believe that living intentionally allows a person to become all that he or she desires to be. Intentional living puts us in a position to experience the fullness of life.

Palm Sunday is this coming Sunday, which kicks off the week, leading up to Easter - called Holy Week. It marks the events and teachings of Jesus Christ leading to his death and resurrection. For a Christian, it is the most significant week on the calendar because it defines our faith and practices. It shapes our perspectives and ignites our hope for a life that can be lived abundantly.

We thought it might be a good reminder to walk with Christ through next week and draw some challenging conclusions about living intentionally

Sunday:

Jesus knows that this week will be the end of his ministry culminating in his death. He intentionally goes to Jerusalem where the events of this week will occur. Prior to this, the religious leaders had rejected Christ's claims to be the Messiah as foretold by the prophets. As the result they swayed the consensus of the people. When Jesus arrives in Jerusalem his disciples secure a donkey's colt for Jesus to ride on, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9.

Upon seeing Jesus, the people of Jerusalem take up palm branches (a symbol of goodness and victory) laying them across Jesus path and waving them in the air. They shout, "Hosanna" which in the language of the day, means "Save us now" or "rescue us." In a defiant act of rebellion against the religious teaching and the rule of Rome, the people hail Jesus as their "Messiah" or savior king.

Intentional living involves discernment and decisive action. Instead of just swallowing the teachings of the spiritual leadership, the people of Jerusalem exercise wisdom. The religious teachers told them that Jesus was an imposter, a false teacher, and

even empowered by Satan himself. Yet the people saw the work of Christ's ministry, experienced his teaching, and arrived at a different conclusion. Too often today, **we would rather be told what to think theologically than to wrestle through the cognitive dissonance that comes with being discerning.**

Discernment becomes impotent unless decisive action is taken. The proclamation of "Hosanna" was an act of treason. The people had proclaimed a new king over Caesar. Discernment and decisiveness created the avalanche that shaped the rest of the week's events. Think about intentionally exercising more discernment and breaking out of your comfort zone by taking decisive action.

Monday:

Jesus decides to go with his disciples to the temple on Monday. This day is marked by two significant events that inform intentional living. As Jesus walks to the temple he passes a fig tree that is barren. This large tree has failed to produce fruit. Jesus curses the tree. When he arrives in the temple he is incensed by the money changers who had presented themselves as spiritual directors and helpers but were profiteering from the spiritual needs of the people. Jesus drives these money changers out of the temple using a whip. This event will only fuel the fire of resolve by the spiritual leaders to put Jesus to death.

Both events are a strong pronouncement of judgment against benign, dormant, or dead spirituality. Jesus' words and actions on this day show that genuine spirituality is more than just going through the motions and having an appearance of faith. For the Christian, intentional living is not about routinely following spiritual disciplines. It involves a developing a genuine faith or trust in the sovereign goodness of God. Living intentionally involves an eternal perspective that sees life as a trust journey.

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Live intentionally into this Holy Week Monday by taking spiritual inventory. Do you really trust God or just say you do? If your theology teaches that God will care for you (Mt 6:25-34) then trust him by not being anxious about the future. If your theology informs you that God works all things out for good (Rom. 8:28-39) then stop wallowing in the negative mire of life and trust God to show you the good. **Do you intentionally exercise faith in God or do you just go through the motions of spirituality?**

Tuesday:

On Tuesday Jesus returns to the temple. He and his disciples pass by the fig tree again and find that it has died and is withering up (wow! talk about a powerful object lesson). Upon arriving at the temple, Jesus is greeted by the religious leaders who attempt to blind-side him with ethical and spiritual questions as a means of discrediting him and robbing him of his spiritual authority. In doing this, Jesus exposes their hypocrisy and spiritual bankruptcy. Jesus teaches that **the most important commandment is to love God and love others** (Mt.22). **He also teaches that anyone who wants to be great must be the servant of all** (Mt. 23). If this doesn't inform the intent of our living, nothing does.

Jesus then goes to the Mount of Olives where he has a private talk with his disciples regarding the end of the age and his second coming. This Olivet discourse is Jesus' teaching on intentional living. He reminds his disciples of the importance of being discerning and remaining faithful. Living faithful isn't about getting caught in the bondage of following a lot of spiritual rules. Jesus exposed that as being the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. Faithfulness was about living full, virtuous lives. Living great lives comes from giving, serving and loving others.

Live intentionally into this Holy Week Tuesday by beginning a new life venture of being more compassionate. Make it a life goal to be a servant to others.

Wednesday:

There is no record of any events recorded in Jesus' life on Wednesday of the Passion Week. It is believed that Jesus probably rested at the home of Mary and Martha. Thursday was the celebration of the Passover meal so Wednesday may have been a time where the disciples just chilled and reflected on the implications of the upcoming Passover holiday.

In our last few posts, Jer and I challenged you to live intentionally into [quietness](#), [overcoming the urgency of life](#), and [mitigating hectic living](#). **Live intentionally into this Holy Week Wednesday by carving out some regular down time.**

I just met with a guy who was in a mentor group that I led. He owns his own business and is becoming very successful in his industry. When I saw him I commented on how healthy he looked. His response was that he intentionally decided to put some time of reflection into his life every week. As the result he is living with less stress and looking healthier than I had ever seen him. Be intentional about down time.

Thursday:

This is a loaded day in the Passion Week. Jesus prepares for and eats the Passover meal with his disciples. He is going to be betrayed and taken before an illegal tribunal. Later in the night, he will be shuffled between the temple officials and the Roman magistrates and sentenced to death. But before all the tragedy, humiliation, and painful anxiety begins, Jesus will give his disciples some final words. This is the upper room discourse.

These are probably the most powerful words Jesus speaks. They become the focal point for much of Christianity. Jesus again speaks of love as being the defining mark for those who would be true followers of him. He reminds them to serve each other and then he reveals his ultimate love for them by telling them of his imminent death. Jesus breaks bread and pours wine in a rite that will become the practice of Communion or Eucharist for his followers to this day.

Intentional living for Holy Week Thursday should include some thought about how love can become a lifestyle practice. For the Christian it should be couched in the remembrance of the ultimate loving sacrifice that Christ made on our behalf. Take some time to read Jesus upper room discourse in John 13-17. It is packed full of truths that should shape our living.

Friday:

Church liturgy has always referred to this day as Good Friday but there was nothing good about the scourging, torment, crucifixion, and death of Jesus Christ. These are the events of the day, and before 3:00 p.m., Jesus will be dead.

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His body will be taken down off the cross and quickly put into the tomb of a wealthy follower before sunset. It would not be prepared for burial because sunset marked the beginning of the Sabbath during which no work could be done.

So then, why is this “good” and what implications for intentional living could we possibly draw from this day?

It is unclear how the name Good Friday came to be attached to these events but many theologians believe that it centers in the good sacrifice of atonement that Christ, the Good Shepherd, made on our behalf. It may be referred to as Good Friday because the events of the day reconciled the world through an atoning sacrifice. This atoning sacrifice was the ultimate price paid on our behalf to bring us freedom from the bondage and consequence of sin.

The prophet Isaiah says that Messiah was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our sin; our chastisement was upon him and by the stripes of his torment we are healed and made free (Isaiah 53).

How free are you? How free do you live? On this Good Friday take time to assess your living by asking yourself those questions. Take a look at our posts on [overcoming fear and anxiety](#); [standing firm against regret](#) and [living free in forgiveness](#). Intentional living involves living fully into the freedom that Christ secured for us.

Saturday:

Jesus’ body lay unprepared in a tomb under watch of temple guards. The disciples are in grief and unable to wrap their minds around what has just occurred. Unbeknownst to them, this day was the calm before the greatest historical event in human history, an event that would cement the cornerstone of Christian faith throughout the ages.

Resurrection!

Saturday of Holy week has always been the calming day before a day of jubilation. In retrospect it has become a day of anticipation. Be intentional to look toward Sunday with an expectation of great joy.



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