

An *Easter* Devotional



Trail to  the Tree

Ann Voskamp

An *Easter* Devotional



Trail to the Tree

By Ann Voskamp

www.aholyexperience.com

Copies are happily permissible. Sharing the book through www.aholyexperience.com is humbly appreciated, as is linking from FB. **Distribution of this e-book from you own website, or reposting any images or text on your own website is forbidden. Resale is prohibited, as is editing or altering the document in any way.** Grace and Peace in Him.

Where are You? {Day 1}

Trail to  the Tree

We pause to **listen** to His Word, **linger** on His Word, **lift up our word prayers** to the Word...then go **live** the Word.



Art: Lucas Cranach

Listen to the Word (lectio/read):

From the Message: Gen.3: 1-15:

The serpent was clever, more clever than any wild animal God had made. He spoke to the Woman: “Do I understand that God told you not to eat from any tree in the garden?”

2-3 The Woman said to the serpent, “Not at all. We can eat from the trees in the garden. It’s only about the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘Don’t eat from it; don’t even touch it or you’ll die.’”

4-5 The serpent told the Woman, “You won’t die. God knows that the moment you eat from that tree, you’ll see what’s really going on. You’ll be just like God, knowing everything, ranging all the way from good to evil.”

6 When the Woman saw that the tree looked like good eating and realized what she would get out of it—she’d know everything!—she took and ate the fruit and then gave some to her husband,

and he ate.

7 Immediately the two of them did “see what’s really going on”—saw themselves naked! They sewed fig leaves together as makeshift clothes for themselves.

8 When they heard the sound of God strolling in the garden in the evening breeze, the Man and his Wife hid in the trees of the garden, hid from God.

9 God called to the Man: “Where are you?”

10 He said, “I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. And I hid.”

11 God said, “Who told you you were naked? Did you eat from that tree I told you not to eat from?”

12 The Man said, “The Woman you gave me as a companion, she gave me fruit from the tree, and, yes, I ate it.” God said to the Woman, “What is this that you’ve done?”

13 “The serpent seduced me,” she said, “and I ate.”

14-15 God told the serpent: “Because you’ve done this, you’re cursed, cursed beyond all cattle and wild animals, Cursed to slink on your belly and eat dirt all your life. I’m declaring war between you and the Woman, between your offspring and hers. **He’ll wound your head, you’ll wound his heel.**”

Linger on the Word:

When they heard the sound of God strolling in the garden in the evening breeze, the Man and his Wife hid in the trees of the garden, hid from God. God called to the Man: “**Where are you?**” (*Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage...linger.*)

Lift up our word prayers to the Word:

Father, You are calling for us, calling us out of hiding. In the messy fall at the beginning, You promised the perfect ending. The serpent’s head is crushed and we come out of the shadows. And into Your presence.

Live the Word (contemplate His Word till the settle to heart, hands, feet):

Today, because of Christ’s crushing satan, don’t hide from Him who is calling, “**Where are you?**” **Enter into His presence today:** sing hymns, pray the psalms, go for a walk and praise Creator, light a candle and give thanks.



Ram in the Thicket {Day 2}

Trail to  the Tree

We pause to **listen** to His Word, **linger over His Word**, **lift up our words in prayer** to The Word...then go **live the Word**.



Listen to the Word:

From the Message: Gen.22: 1-14

After all this, God tested Abraham. God said, "Abraham!" "Yes?" answered Abraham. "I'm listening." 2 He said, "Take your dear son Isaac whom you love and go to the land of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I'll point out to you." 3-5 Abraham got up early in the morning and saddled his donkey. He took two of his young servants and his son Isaac. He had split wood for the burnt offering. He set out for the place God had directed him. On the third day he looked up and saw the place in the distance. Abraham told his two young servants, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I are going over there to worship; then we'll come back to you."

6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and gave it to Isaac his son to carry. He carried the flint and the knife. The two of them went off together.

7 Isaac said to Abraham his father, "Father?" "Yes, my son." "We have flint and wood, but where's the sheep for the burnt offering?"

8 Abraham said, "**Son, God will see to it that there's a sheep for the burnt offering.**" And they kept on walking together.

9-10 They arrived at the place to which God had directed him. Abraham built an altar. He laid out the wood. Then he tied up Isaac and laid him on the wood. Abraham reached out and took the knife to kill his son.

11 Just then an angel of God called to him out of Heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Yes, I'm listening."

12 "Don't lay a hand on that boy! Don't touch him! Now I know how fearlessly you fear God; you didn't hesitate to place your son, your dear son, on the altar for me."

13 Abraham looked up. He saw a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. Abraham took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

14 **Abraham named that place God-Yireh** (God-Sees-to-It). That's where we get the saying, "On the mountain of God, he sees to it."

Linger over the Word:

Abraham said, "Son, God will see to it that there's a sheep for the burnt offering."... Abraham named that place God-Yireh (God-Sees-to-It). *(Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage...linger.)* **Lift up words in prayer to The Word:**

Father, You see-to-it. Whatever "it" is.



You always have a ram in the thicket. Even when “it” is the destination of my soul. Even if the ram in the thicket is Your Only Beloved Son. We fearlessly fear you, our Jehovah Jireh, for being our Provider, the One Who sees to “it” — *everything*.

For really, what is there then to fear?

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

Today, live in trust, knowing He will see-to-it. *All* of “it.”

If He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things (Ro. 8:32)?

Today, what worry, fear, anxiety can we lay down? We choose to walk in faith, knowing that there is a Ram in the thicket. And His name is Jesus.

Gift of Rescue {Day 3}

Trail to  the Tree

We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.

Perhaps gather family to join, cutting out the accompanying artwork and hang symbol on an Easter Passion Tree.



Listen to His Word (read):

From the Message: Exodus 12:21-30

Moses assembled all the elders of Israel. He said, "Select a lamb for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the bowl of blood and smear it on the

lintel and on the two doorposts. No one is to leave the house until morning. God will pass through to strike Egypt down. When he sees the blood on the lintel and the two doorposts, God will pass over the doorway; he won't let the destroyer enter your house to strike you down with ruin.

24-27 "Keep this word. It's the law for you and your children, forever. When you enter the land which God will give you as he promised, keep doing this. And when your children say to you, 'Why are we doing this?' tell them: **'It's the Passover-sacrifice to God who passed over the homes of the Israelites in Egypt when he hit Egypt with death but rescued us.'**" *The people bowed and worshiped.* 28 The Israelites then went and did what God had commanded Moses and Aaron. They did it all. 29 At midnight God struck every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sits on his throne, right down to the firstborn of the prisoner locked up in jail. Also the firstborn of the animals. 30 Pharaoh got up that night, he and all his servants and everyone else in Egypt—what wild wailing and lament in Egypt! There wasn't a house in which someone wasn't dead.

Linger on His Word: (Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage...linger.)

"It's the Passover-sacrifice to God who passed over the homes of the Israelites in Egypt when he hit Egypt with death but rescued us." The people bowed and worshiped.

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word:

Father, we paint ourselves red with Jesus' blood so that satan cannot enter into this soul place to wrack ruin and death, but that You would come through the door of our hearts... that we would come through Jesus, the door, and into Your Presence.

We are rescued. Rescued! *Passed Over! We bow down.*

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

Today, we wear a necklace, a bracelet, a scarf, some visible reminder that we have chosen to clothe the lintels of our souls in You. We choose You. Because of the blood and cross of Christ, we are *passed over*. We live a day of worship: gratitude for the Gift of Rescue.



Cure for Discontent {Day 4}

Trail to  the Tree

We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.



Listen to His Word: From the Message: Numbers 21:4-9

They set out from Mount Hor along the Red Sea Road, a detour around the land of Edom. The people became irritable and cross as they traveled. They spoke out against God and Moses:

“Why did you drag us out of Egypt to die in this godforsaken country? No decent food; no water—we can’t stomach this stuff any longer.”

6-7 So God sent poisonous snakes among the people; they bit them and many in Israel died. The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke out against God and you. Pray to God; ask him to take these snakes from us.” Moses prayed for the people.

8 God said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it on a flagpole: **Whoever is bitten and looks at it will live.**”

9 So Moses made a snake of fiery copper and put it on top of a flagpole. Anyone bitten by a snake who then looked at the copper snake lived.

Linger...silently meditate on on His Word:

Whoever is bitten and looks at it will live.

(Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage...linger.)

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word:

Father, we repent of our grumbling, our complaining, of all the stuff we wail that we can no longer stomach. **We’ve been bitten by the snake of discontent.** Cause our eyes to look on Jesus and live. With Jesus, we have more, *more*, than enough.

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

Today, keep tongues from the sin of ingratitude.

When the serpent of discontent bites, choose to look to Jesus Who hung on the tree to give us everything we need.

He is our life.



Let Loose! {Day 5}

Trail to  the Tree

We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.



Listen to His Word (read):

From the Message:

There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, **"Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master.** This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger." 13-14 At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to all men and women on earth who please

him.

15-18 As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. “Let’s get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us.” They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherders were impressed. 19-20 Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they’d been told!

Linger on His Word:

“Don’t be afraid. I’m here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David’s town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. (Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage, re-read again... again...linger.)

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word:

Father! You’ve come — God in the Flesh! **The Fall Mess is swept away by the the Faithful Messiah!** We too set off at a run, wanting to see! Believe! Hear us let loose! We glorify and praise You for everything we’ve heard and seen. It’s turned out exactly the way You said: You came to crush the serpent. **AMEN!**

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

Today we can’t help ourselves. We are spilling with the good news: we must speak, announce, that great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide!

Who is one person that you could tell today that a Savior has come, a Savior who is Messiah and Master?

Call them, write them a note, drop off a treat for them—and tell them the glorious news!



Trusting to go into Egypt {Day 6} Trail to the Tree

We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.



Listen to His Word (read): Matthew 2:13-18 from NLT

After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, and they stayed there until Herod's death. **This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "I called my Son out of Egypt."** Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance. Herod's brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

"A cry was heard in Ramah—weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted, for they are dead." *Linger...silently meditate on His Word:*

That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, and they stayed there until Herod's death. **This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "I called my Son out of Egypt."**

(Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage, re-read again... again...linger.)Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word:

Father, we marvel how You transformed Egypt, the place where the babe Moses once floated down the Nile to escape the blade meant for all male infants, and used that same land as a place where the holy Child Jesus might find refuge.

At Your fingertips, places of death are made into places of life.

Mary and Joseph trusted You to deliver them even through the means of Egypt. Lead us into the same firm faith, Father. That in places that once meant death, we'd trust that You will bring forth life. Places like the Cross.

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

Today, have faith that places that seem to be dying places... God means to bring forth life.

Spend time today with someone who has hurt you. Show them Christ's love. Have faith that God will to meet you there. Watch for signs of new life.





Listen to His Word (read):

Matthew 3:13-17 from NLT

Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?" But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him. After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him.

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

Linger... silently meditate on His Word: (Close eyes and envision the passage, re-read again... again...linger. Don't rush on.)

And a voice from heaven said, " This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word:

Father, Your sinless One, Jesus, humbled himself for a baptism He did not need for He desired to carry out all that You need. Do we? *Show us how.* Because of Jesus' humble obedience, the heavens open now for us too, allowing the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, to descend upon us. *Change us now.*

Plunge us today into the waters of salvation and wash our sins away because of the Trinity: Father sending Obedient Son, Son showing us the Way to You, Spirit coming down with fruits. *We bend low.*

Adopted into Your family because of Your dearly loved Son who brings us great joy, cause us today to bring the Father great joy.

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

Today, bring Father great joy by living the fruits of the Spirit: Do an act of love for someone in your family today. Be a peacemaker and bite your tongue. Speak gently. Think on the Spirit descending on the Son.

And let Him light today upon you.



Living on His Bread {Day 8}

Trail to  the Tree

We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.



Listen to His Word (read): Luke 4:1-13 from the NLT

Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry.

Then the devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread.”
“But Jesus told him, “No! **The Scriptures say,** ‘People do not live by bread alone.’” Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. “I will give you

the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them,” the devil said, “because they are mine to give to anyone I please. I will give it all to you if you will worship me.”

Jesus replied, “**The Scriptures say**, ‘You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.’”

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, ‘He will order his angels to protect and guard you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’”

Jesus responded, “**The Scriptures also say**, ‘You must not test the Lord your God.’” When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.

Linger ...silently meditate on His Word: (Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage, re-read again... again...linger. Don't rush on.)

Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry.

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word :

Father, He was hungry and He ate. Of the bread of Your Words. *Let us too.* He was lured with the glitter of this world, and He worshipped. You, and You alone. *Let us too.*

He was dared with Scripture. But He knew all of Scripture. *Let us too.*

He was tempted. And He conquered. *Let us too.* Because today, please keep us in Him.

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

Today, fast. Be hungry for God alone. Instead of eating, enter in and worship, let His Word dwell in you richly, filling you. For it is your life.

Everyday Miracles {Day 9}

Trail to  the Tree

We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.



Listen to His Word (read):

John 2:1-11 from NLT

The next day there was a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus' mother told him, "They have no more wine." "Dear woman, that's not our problem," Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." But his mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Standing nearby were six stone water jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." When the jars had been filled, he said, "Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies." So the servants

followed his instructions. When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. "A host always serves the best wine first," he said. "Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!" This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

Linger... silently meditate on His Word: (Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage, re-read again... again...linger. Don't rush on.)

When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. **"A host always serves the best wine first," he said. "Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!" This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him.**

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word:

Son of God, take us to the end of us, so Your time may come. Son of God, require ready obedience from us, that You may fill our everydays with miracles of goodness.

Son of God, sweeten the colorless common of our days, into the deep sweet rich of You.

Turn our water into wine, the stain You poured out for us.

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

Today, think of one way our Lord has turned your water into wine? What has He made surprisingly sweet, rich, in your life? Draw it out of the barrel today, and use it: revel in a relationship, ponder Grace, notice your health, give thanks for sun, stars, trees of the field, wind on your face. **Drink of everyday miracles.** He has revealed His glory. Do you believe?



Broken and Multiplied {Day 10} Trail to the Tree

We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.



Listen to His Word (read):

Matt. 14:13-22 in NLT

As soon as Jesus heard the news, he left in a boat to a remote area to be alone. But the crowds heard where he was headed and followed on foot from many towns.

Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

That evening the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves.”

But Jesus said, “That isn’t necessary—you feed them.”

“But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish!” they answered.

“Bring them here,” he said.

Then he told the people to sit down on the grass. Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he gave the bread to the disciples, who distributed it to the people. They all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers.

About 5,000 men were fed that day, in addition to all the women and children!

Linger ... silently meditate on His Word: (Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage, re-read again... again...linger. Don't rush on.)

But Jesus said, “That isn’t necessary—you feed them.” “But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish!” they answered. “Bring them here,” he said.

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word:

Son of God, where You go, let us follow. Heal us. Have compassion on us broken, wounded ones. Take our little love and multiply it. Take our great sin and erase it.

We look to heaven with what is meagerly ours, ask You to bless what little we are, to break us, and distribute us to the people who encircle us.

We ask to be broken for others, as You were broken for us. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

Today, take the little that you are, pray that God may bless you, then break yourself for others. As He has fed us, let us feed others.

Make a meal, a sweet treat, a loaf of bread, a cup of coffee, for someone who needs to be fed with His love. Watch your joy multiply.



A series preparing hearts for Easter... (Day10)We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.



Listen to His Word (read): Matt. 14:13-22 in NLT

One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them.

“God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.

God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.

God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.

God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. **Be happy about it! Be very glad!** For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

Linger...silently meditate on His Word: (Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage, re-read again... again...linger. Don't rush on.) **"God blesses those who are poor... who mourn... who are humble... who hunger and thirst for justice... who are merciful... whose hearts are pure... who work for peace... who are persecuted for doing right."** **Be happy about it! Be very glad!** For a great reward awaits you in heaven.

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word:

Father God, You bless. It is the essence of who You are, the God who so love, He gave... **And You bless with all manner of goodness and happiness, when we follow Your counter-culture, radical ways.** Before His crucifixion, *Your Son answered* the interrogating Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." Jesus' sermon on the Mount not only testifies to this truth, but invites us into His kingdom too. Father, we gather around You and ask You to teach us how to live as Your citizens. **Citizens of the upside-down kingdom.**

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

Today, live out the radical ways of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

Find one person to whom you may show mercy. Today, work for peace in your relationships. Stand up for what is right, and rejoice in being persecuted. Can anyone tell today that You are a citizen of His Kingdom?



Resurrect! {Day 12}

Trail to  the Tree

A series preparing hearts for Easter... (Day 12) We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.



Listen to His Word (read): John 11:32-42 in ESV

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.

“Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” Then Jesus said, “**Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?**” So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “**Lazarus, come out!**” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and **let him go.**”

Linger ...silently meditate on His Word: (Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage, re-read again... again...linger. Don't rush on.)

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word :

Father, we thank You that You have heard us. We thank You that You are a man of sorrows, acquainted with our grief. You weep with us. We thank You that we too may believe and see Your glory. You radiate through our day. **We thank You that like Israelites being released from Pharaoh's slavery, so You have called to us, “Let him go!” Released from sin's bondage! Death's chains! Grave's curse!** We thank You that we come out! With You, first fruits of the dead! Yes, even us who once stinketh with sin, us too! In the name of He who resurrects, was resurrected and will resurrect us, too, rolling away the stone.

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

Today, give thanks for our release. Visit the grave of a believer, and give thanks for Jesus calling us out of death. **Write down a sin with which you struggle, wrap it in a strip of old cloth, and bury it.** Rejoice that you are called out to new life! Plant a seed today, believe, and see His glory. Can you hear Him calling out new life?



Live the Last Supper {Day 13}

Trail to  the Tree

A series preparing hearts for Easter... (Day 13) We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.



Listen to His Word (read): Matthew 26:17-30 ESV

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?” He said, “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’” And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.

When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. And as they were eating, he said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?” He answered, “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.” Judas, who would betray him, answered, “Is it I, Rabbi?” He said to him, “You have said so.”

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the

disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." **And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them,** saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Linger ...silently meditate on His Word: (Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage, re-read again... again...linger. Don't rush on.)

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word:

Father, we, like Judas, have dipped hands with You, ate from Your table... and have betrayed You. You know. And yet You still invite us to the Passover Table, the place of our deliverance from bondage. You took of the bread, accepting what was to come, and offered it as nourishment. **You gave thanks, though the betrayer sat before You. You broke bread, Your very body, for the likes of us.**

You gave of Yourself to those with the courage to follow, to eat and drink at this table. This Last Supper was the world's most costly feast: You, God incarnate, gave Your flesh as our food, Your blood as our drink. Father, we give thanks for this food for in it we taste and see that the Lord is **good, sins forgiven.** In the name of Him on whom we sup.

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

Today, drink from the cup. **Whatever God gives today, give thanks for it, and drink it all down.** The eucharist, another name for the Lord's Supper, comes from the Greek word that means "thanksgiving." **Today, live the eucharist.** Count your blessings; wake up to the feast that He has spread before you. How can we not give thanks? Take, eat, this is His body given for you.



Keeping Watch {Day 14}

Trail to  the Tree

We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.



Listen to His Word (read): Matthew 21:36-46 in ESV

Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” Peter said to him, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!” And all the disciples said the same. Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and **pray**.” And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “**So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you**

may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. **Rise, let us be going; see,** my betrayer is at hand.”

Linger ...silently meditate on His Word: (Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage, re-read again... again...linger. Don't rush on.) **And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”**

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word (oratio):

Father, we sinned against You in the first Garden, rebelling in that Garden of Eden. And Your Son meets You in this Garden, the Garden of Gethsemane, to perfectly submit to Your perfect will to pay for all our gaping sins. Jesus' heart fractures and breaks under the anguish of it all, of what He must bear for our sins. And we, like the disciples, sleep. **We cannot stay awake, awake to You, awake to so great a salvation. Daily, we sleepwalk.** Father, forgive us. Our spirit is willing, but our flesh is weak. You know. You see. And yet You intercede, sorrow unto death, for us who drowse on. Father, wake us! Let us rise, see, pray!

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

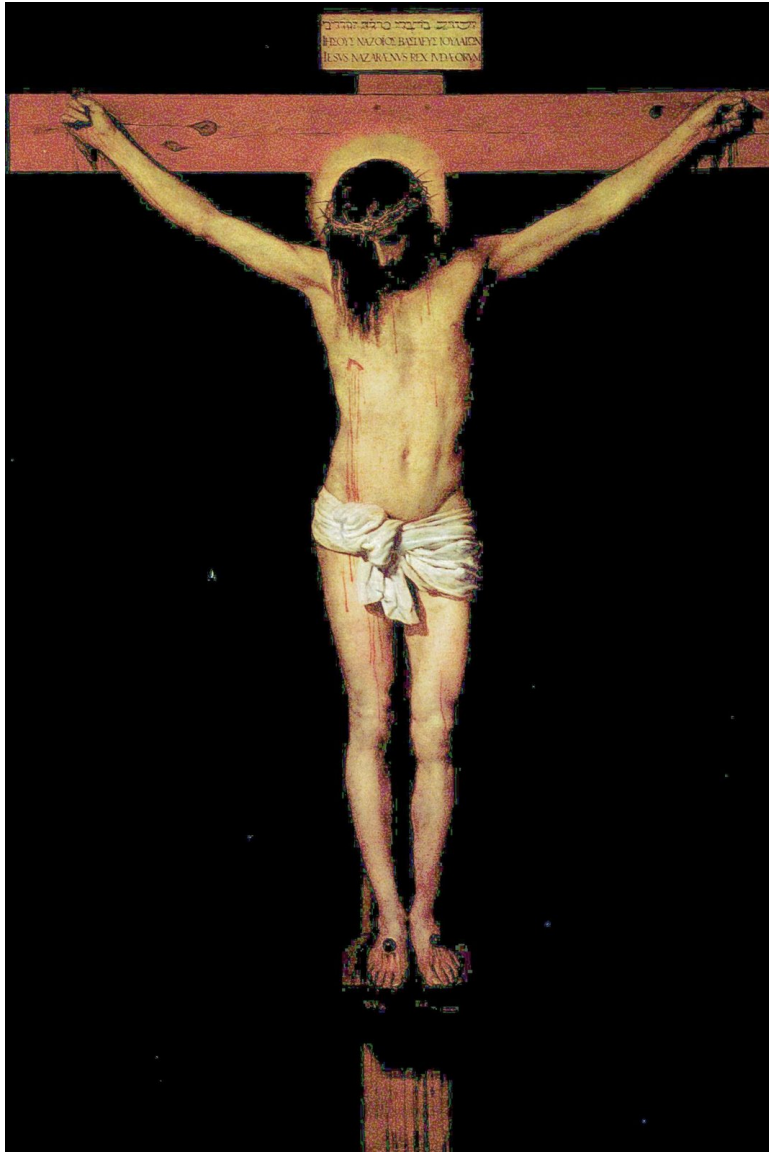
Today, pray. Let Your heart break with the things that break His: pray for His Body, the church, divided and shattered and bickering, for the persecuted church laboring faithfully in hard places for the Kingdom. For young girls contemplating abortions and elders quietly dying and the hurting all over this world, for missionaries who answer the call to leave it all behind and go, for the souls of your neighbors, the future of your family, the vision of your government, the love in your community of faith. For the salvation of the world. **Can you, on your knees, keep watch with Jesus...even for one hour?**



Crucified with Christ {Day 15}

Trail to  the Tree

We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.



Listen to His Word (read): Matthew 27:32-54 in ESV

As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. They came to a place called Golgotha (which means **The Place of the Skull**).

There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it.

When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. **Those who passed by hurled insults at him**, shaking their heads and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘**I am the Son of God.**’ ”

In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him. From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”—which means, “**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**” When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.” Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus’ resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “**Surely he was the Son of God!**”

Linger ...silently meditate on His Word: (Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage, re-read again... again...linger. Don't rush on.) **From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”—which means, “My God, my God, why have you**

forsaken me?”

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word:

Father, today we come dreading to the Place of the Skull. Our sins have led us here. Your Love will bring us back.

Jesus, You did not drink their gall. Because You came to drink down the cup of suffering. All of it. You would not save Yourself, let God rescue You, or call on Elijah to release You. For You were about Your Father’s business: saving, rescuing, releasing us.

We twist in anguish at Your cry “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”— “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” God forsaking God, this is a mystery beyond understanding. A forsaking that was meant for us, but wretched alienation and blackness experienced by You.

Because of that tormented howl, the barrier that kept us from God tears in two. And we who have insulted You, mocked You, denied You and crucified You, we fall on our knees and whisper Good Friday truth: **“Surely this man was the Son of God.”**

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):

Today, repent. Name the ugly sins that crucified Him. Write down your idols and angry heart, your lies and gossip, your envy and pride. See what caused His stripes. Nail the paper to a tree. Die to the old you. Feel His wounds. Touch His pain. Be washed in His blood.

Are you prepared to be crucified with Christ?



Waiting {Day 16}

Trail to  the Tree

We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.



Listen to His Word (read): Matt. 27: 57-56 in ESV

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. **And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in**

his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can." So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

Linger (meditatio)..silently meditate on His Word: (Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage, re-read again... again...linger. Don't rush on.) **And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.**

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word: Lord Jesus, You had no place to lay Your head when You lived, and no place to lay Your body when You died. As You took sins that were not Your own, so You took a grave that was not Your own. You who took on flesh were never of this world, and You call us now to our mansion You are preparing for us in the skies. **You died with the thieves but You were buried with the rich. And so You take us sinning thieves, and offer us the inheritance of riches, unending, in God.** Like Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, we sit opposite Your tomb, and we never leave, but live here. For continually we bury our sins, and, as surely as we breathe, we inhale the hope of what will happen at this tomb on Resurrection Sunday. *In the name of Him who went to the depths for us...*

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet): **Today, wait. Sit at the tomb and wait on the Lord. Trust when all is dark.** Believe when the stone is rolled in and sealed. Carry a stone in your pocket and remember: *there is hope.* Wait and have faith in the coming Resurrection, glorious light erupting on black horizon.



Behold Your Lamb {Day 17}

Trail to  the Tree

We pause to listen to His Word, linger, lift up voice in prayer...then go live the Word.



Listen to His Word (read):

Matt. 28: 1-10 in ESV

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold,

he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.”

So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!”

And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and **there they will see me.**”

Linger ..silently meditate on His Word: (Join children in closing eyes and envisioning the passage, re-read again... again...linger. Don't rush on.) **But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.**

Lift up voice in prayer, responding to His Word:

Father, Your heart seized shut, hanging there on the cross. You faced him who slithered sin into the beginning, satan. And crushed his head. Price paid. Sacrifice made. It is finished—our debt, our bondage, our estrangement. So You rise! You hold the keys of life and death!

It's Resurrection Sunday, Lord. But isn't every Sunday, always, a celebration of this, You commanding light to shatter the darkness? Our wonder, our gratitude, our awe draws us to celebrate this, the linchpin event of history, every seven days, over and over again. **You have made us perpetually the people of the Resurrection, touching Your wounds, feeling for You...** and declaring, “He is *alive!*”

So give us courage to run, Father, great joy coursing through these veins, to tell the world! We, the Resurrection people, call the world to come see You! You who breathe before us, Who come out to meet us. We fall at Your feet and worship a risen, living, embracing God, a **Saviour who lives forever with our names etched, scars, on the palm of Your hands.**

Live the Word (contemplate it so long that it settles down into heart, hands, feet):



Today, exchange the dark stone of waiting in your pocket, to a white stone. The stone is rolled away! **Christ is alive!** And someday God Himself will give you a white stone, the stone of victory, heaven's purity, with a new name written on it. (**Revelation 2:17 I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it...**) Historically, judgment votes were cast by stones: black declared guilt, white acquittal, innocence. Christ paid it all, his sacrificial death deemed acceptable, freeing us captives—we are acquitted of sin's punishment! Carry with you your new white stone of *freedom*. Feel His hands: Your name is carved deeply into His resurrected flesh. And one day we will look into His eyes, and He will give us a stone with our new name engraven upon it. Feel your small white stone. Don't you think it will read your new name: "*Child of mine.*"

Behold Your lamb.

Trail to the Tree

This *Easter* Celebration

was brought to you

by a heart that's passionate about Compassion.com.

Ann Voskamp is an advocate with Compassion International and was invited to be a Compassion Blogger traveling with a team to Guatemala. The story of the little girl who changed her life is included in these end pages, a gift to you this Christmas.

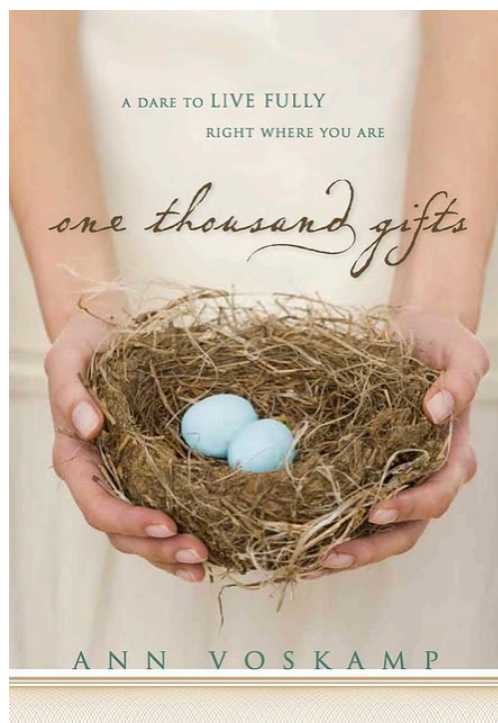
If this Trail to the Tree book has blessed you in any way, might you consider giving a gift of even a dollar or two to Compassion.com?

Giving to the least of these is our giving to Him. Might you?



Click Here → compassion.com

This Easter, Live *Fully* the abundant life – Right Where You Are



“Ann Voskamp is truly one of the most gifted writers I have ever read.

If you want a book that will challenge you and mess with you in the most beautiful of ways, *this is it.*

And you won't just read it and put it away. **You will return to this treasure for years to come.**”

~ **Lysa Terkeurst**, *President of Proverbs 31 Ministries, best-selling author of Becoming More Than a Good Bible Study Girl*(Zondervan)

One Thousand Gifts: A Dare to Live Fully Right Where You Are

(A New York Times Bestseller :: Zondervan)

... heart-achingly beautiful stories that invite you into
a way of seeing that opens your eyes to ordinary *amazing* grace,
a way of being present to God that makes you *deeply* happy,
a way of living that is finally *fully* alive

Live the life He intended for you –

a full life of joy and all glory all to Him

Read more at onethousandgifts.com as we dare to *fully live!*

Published by Zondervan : **Click Here to Order:**

http://www.amazon.com/One-Thousand-Gifts-Fully-Right/dp/0310321913?ie=UTF8&tag=holyexper-0&link_code=bt&camp=213689&creative=392969



