



Easter
online



A BLUEPRINT HANDBOOK FOR YOUR EASTER LOCKDOWN WEEKEND

We don't want to let Easter pass us by, and the lockdown means you aren't spending the long weekend off on holiday somewhere. So here's a guided way to spend your weekend with Jesus, reflecting upon the Cross and the good news that it brings.

A special shout out to Adele Ahlberg Calhoun's book *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform us* from which the below is adapted and taken, to help shape our practice of silence, prayer and celebration.

SILENCE

Good Friday & Saturday

Following on from the Stations of the Cross service (8.30pm), we are inviting everyone who is keen to practice a time of silence. Entering silence is a way of freeing ourselves from the addiction to distraction and to meet God in a place beyond words. It is also a chance to reflect upon Jesus choice to go to the Cross, and the bigness of the God who loves us that much.

Practicing silence helps us grow attentive to the voice of Jesus, is an opportunity to have deeper intimacy with God and to receiving quiet from the chaos and noise of our life.

There are multiple ways to participate, you could choose to a short time of silence, or to go right through to Sunday morning!

Warming up

Begin with 10 mins. Set a timer so you won't have to keep checking. Intentionally invite God to be with you and become quiet. As you notice noises in the background or distracting thoughts, notice them and then let them float by. Let the quiet deepen. Try this a few times a day in the lead up to the weekend. Notice, what happens to you when you practice this?

The big day

In advance, explain to your bubble that you'll be silent, so will just use non-verbal communication for the day. Let other people know you'll be out of contact, then turn off your phone, computer and radio.

As you enter into silence place yourself in God's presence with the words 'Here I am'. If worries or distractions come to mind, imagine them like boats floating past down a stream. Use some time to go about your daily tasks without noise, and instead notice how the silence is for you, and listen and look for where God is with you. Spend other parts of your time in silence and stillness with God in ways that are meaningful for you. Use the appendix 'Spending time with God' for ideas.

CELEBRATION

Easter Sunday

On Sunday morning we rise and celebrate the glorious good news — Christ is risen from the grave! Death has been swallowed up in victory.

God celebrates, he invented delight, joy and celebration, and one way we enter into the divine life of the Trinity is to join in celebration too. Crank on some music, cook up some food, dance, sing, party — whatever going all out in celebration looks like: give yourself wholehearted to this. Know as you do so that you're joining in with all of heaven — angels, prophets, apostles — in their continuous state of praise and celebration of God's presence and goodness.

Practicing celebration helps enlarge our capacity to enjoy and serve God. It doesn't depend on perfect circumstances or feelings, but tunes us in to the deeper pulse of goodness and hope that runs beneath the hum of sorrow.

Warming up

This week, if you've been in a funk, practice a small celebration by considering where you're most prone to celebrating God. Alone? With others? In worship? In nature? Go to that place and ask yourself 'what do I want to tell God about what joy I receive there?'

The big day

Rise early (or celebrate with a sleep in) and party! Share hi-5s with your bubble, call a friend, cook a special breakfast, dance! Yaz!

When the eating and dancing can be done no more, settle into some time with God — consider how God loves you. Read Zephaniah 3:17. Then be still and listen. How is God celebrating you? Celebrate the God who celebrates you.

You can also spend time recalling God's gifts, provisions, guidance and love. Write a gratitude list, write a song, doodle or make a collage that represents what you're joyful about. Find a verse of scripture that embodies celebration and meditate on that.

Spending time with God: **Taken and adapted from Adele Ahlberg** **Calhoun's *Spiritual Disciples Handbook***

When my children were young, I was very conscious of bonding with them. I would look into their eyes, whisper their names, and stroke their heads. (someone had told me that head stroking gave babies a sense of well-being). In any case I was eager to log in the hours needed to create trust and relationship.

Bonding is real. It happens as we spend time with others. Bonding is something that requires presence, not simply information about someone. Magazines are full of information about famous people. Biographies give us a glimpse into the lives of others. But it is only in the presence of another that we bond to them.

Bonding with God is not an all-or-nothing endeavour. Some of us feel that if we can't give God a good uninterrupted half hour, we aren't giving him anything. Intentional time set aside for bonding is one of the best gifts we can give anyone. But even small moments spent with God (or others)

matters and eventually add up. If you spent fifteen minutes with God every day for a year, at the end of the year you would have logged over eleven 8-hour days. Fifteen minutes, a half hour, it doesn't seem like much, but over time they become days packed with God! It counts as bonding time. If spending an hour; not to mention a day, with Jesus seems daunting to you, let me suggest it may not be as out of your reach as you think:

Begin where you are

If fifteen minutes what you have, give yourself to God as deeply as you know how to for fifteen minutes. Trust God to receive and work with what you give him.

If you can give more time one day a week, add this appointment with God to your regular rhythm. If you want to intentionally bond with God for an hour or more, choose a place away from your home or work: a park, a sanctuary of a church, a garden, a retreat house. Get away from the distractions that keep you preoccupied and distracted.

Suggestions for bonding hours with God

Allow 5–10 minutes between each exercise. Don't hurry. There are enough suggestions below to fill many hours. Begin with one practice and add a second and third as you can.

Remember: There is no right way to spend time with God. Receive the day as it comes. Don't fret if you don't feel like you're achieving anything or this isn't 'working'. Trust that a moment will come when the seeds planted today will sprout.

Palms down, palms up

Spend 5–10 minutes in silence. Let the internal noise die down. Breathe in the presence of Jesus. He is the oxygen that sustains your soul. Open yourself to God in prayer:

- **Practice 'palms down, palms up'.** Place your palms down on your lap as a symbolic indication of your desire to release the concerns you name to God. Turn your palms up to demonstrate your openness to receive what the Trinity brings. Wait before God. Repeat the palms down palms up several times.

- What do you desire from God during this time of bonding?
- Express your feelings and expectations to God about this time.
- Dialogue with God about where you have sensed his presence in the last week or month.

Ask God what he wants for you to receive during this time. Listen. Respond to any nudging you receive from the Holy Spirit.

Go walking

- Go for a walk and be with God. Notice signs of God's love. Read nature as a revelation of God. If possible, gather a symbol of your time with God — a rock, a branch, a flower. Thank God for how he reveals himself in his creation.
- As you return home from your walk, spend time thinking about, what do you want to leave behind with God, and what do you want to bring home with you.

Praying a psalm

- Slowly read a psalm out loud. Psalm 16, 19, 23, 42 and 51 are a great place to start. Let the psalm echo in your heart and mind. What do you hear God saying to you? Pray your response to God.

Meditate upon the Cross

- Read John 19. Imagine Jesus on the Cross. Pour your sufferings and worries into his wounds. Put all your pain and worry into his nail-pierced hands. Use Psalm 56 to express your own troubles to God.

Using our bodies

- Take a posture that reflects your attitude and desire towards God (kneeling, lying down, standing with arms lifted). Remain in the posture and let your heart seek God.

Eating

- Eat a snack in the presence of God. Let the process of eating remind you of what it means to be nourished through God and his Word, and his world.

Examen

- Listen to your desires through the examen questions:
 - What is life-giving to you? What is life-thwarting?
 - Where do you find love, joy and peace in your life? Where does it seem absent?
 - Where are you sad? Where are you glad?

Pray about what you see.

Sleeping or resting

- If you're sleepy, take a nap or rest. Know that God created sleep, and knows we need rest. Meditate on "I will lie down and sleep in peace for you alone Lord make me dwell in safety" as you head off to sleep.

Meditate

- Take a small snippet of a song lyric, liturgy or scripture and spend time slowly repeating it over. Some to start with could be;
 - Here I am Lord, speak what is true
 - The busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over
 - Be still and know that I am God
 - Eternal Spirit, living God, we live and breath and have our being in you.Meditate upon a name of God that stands out to you: Comforter, Counsellor, Good Shepard, Healer, Mighty God, Father, Messiah, Redeemer, Saviour, Prince of Peace, Lord, Beloved Companion, Word

Drawing

- Draw, paint or doodle — expressing yourself creatively before God. Use this as a way to express something significant about your time with God today or recently. Use this as a way to reflect upon scripture, or upon the character of God.

Confessing the desire to achieve

- Ponder how your time of quiet has been different to how you anticipated. If you feel fretful about how you've been 'doing' your time with God, confess this by sharing honesty with God about what has been hard or annoying. Imagine letting go of your need to prove something or produce something today.

