

The Easter Story Wreath

BEGIN A NEW FAMILY TRADITION TELLING THE LONG STORY OF GRACE

Easter, it's the season to surround ourselves with story, the old, long, deep and wide story of God's long walk to the cross.

So alongside the story of this long walk, long story of grace, I'm inviting you into a new family tradition: A Story Wreath walking out the long story of Easter week by week. This is a craft activity for you and/or your whole household to work on together. An activity that is more than a craft, more than a project. This story-wreath might just become a whispering reminder, nestled there in the centre of your table, the middle of your door, or right there on your wall; gently nudging you throughout your week to stay in the long story of grace.

I've also collected together Scriptures that tell this long story, every week adding a new layer to the journey as you add new layers to the story of grace unfurling in your wreath. (*The 'Long Walk...' story site also covers the same journey in more detail each week at livethelongwalk.com or lentalive.com).*

Below are simple instructions to make the wreath and suggested decorations to add to it week by week.

Let's stay in the long story of grace together this Easter season. Enjoy!



Wreath Creation Instructions

COMPLETE LIST OF WREATH MAKING MATERIALS (CAN BE GATHERED WEEK BY WEEK)

- Week 1: Freshly cut 'weeping' Branches (such as a willow tree or a bottlebrush tree)
Battery operated string lights or Christmas lights.
Greenery, either plastic greenery or fresh greenery (that will dry nicely).
- Week 2: A dark or black ribbon. Freshly plucked leaves.
- Week 3: A Gold ribbon and a natural hessian cord.
- Week 4: A subtle touch of Christmas: Stars, Holly, beads, bells or something else that reminds you of Christmas. Try and keep it subtle. Christmas is part of the story, not the whole.
- Week 5: Seeds and seed pods. Whatever you have to hand. Eucalyptus seed pods, anise stars, cardamom seeds, sunflower seeds. Craft glue, string and ribbon optional.
- Week 6: Foliage with buds on it, plastic or real (wrap the ends in damp tissue paper and foil to keep them alive if they are real). Berries or small fruits.
- Week 7: Royal Purple and Red ribbon or cord. A ring of thorns (optional).
- Week 8: Fresh flowers, Greenery, Butterflies, decorative eggs.

All the decorations are simply suggestions, use what you have around your house that tells the same story as much as possible. You may also already have a wreath you can repurpose making it all a lot simpler!



Week One Light and Life

In the beginning... there was light and life and goodness. God's good world was full of His abundant life-thriving love, creation was brimming over with the generosity of God. Love, Freedom, truth, righteousness, blessing and purpose were everywhere woven into the fabric of God's good creation.

So the beginning of your wreath is a circle. A circle that goes on forever like God and His love. A circle with lights then woven around it, just as God said 'Let there be light' in the very beginning of all things.



And then this circle of light is woven with life: the green brimming, thriving, growing life of God's good creation.

Materials: Freshly cut 'weeping' Branches (such as a willow tree or a bottlebrush tree)
Battery operated string lights or Christmas lights.
Greenery, either plastic greenery or fresh greenery (that will dry nicely).

Step One: Collect long, thin, freshly cut branches from a tree that 'weeps' ie. that's branches drape down in long threads (such as a willow tree or a bottlebrush tree). The branches need to be newly cut so they will bend easily and not break.



Step Two: Bend one of these branches around to form a circle, twisting it around itself to hold it in place. Continue then to add more branches twisting around the first one, twisting in and out of each other until you have a thick base for your wreath. Don't twist them together so tight that there are no spaces though as you will need room to weave other things into the gaps.

Step Three: Now twist string lights or Christmas lights around your wreath (preferably battery powered lights).

Step Four: Now weave, poke and twist into the gaps between the branches the stems of the greenery. Try and help it 'lean' in a similar direction, following the circle of the wreath base.



The final step: Read the story in Scripture found in Genesis 1:1-3 and Genesis 1:26-27 (or Genesis chapters 1-2 altogether) and John 1:1-5 (*Collected for you in the accompanying booklet*).

Let this story of our good beginning and God's good gifts sink into your heart, gather in your mind and influence your thoughts this week.

Week Two Darkness and brokenness

The good world God had formed for us, and the life humankind had with Him didn't remain. The first humans, Adam and Eve rejected God as Lord of their lives and King of their hearts. They chose to listen to a voice other than God's, a deceitful and less loving voice. They chose the mixed reality of good and evil intertwined. Human life had been filled with only good up until this point. Now a darkness entered human experience.

So now our story wreath, that had been all light and life and thriving goodness, is mixed. Dark and Light together. Like the lived reality of all human beings now.

Materials: A dark or black ribbon. Freshly plucked leaves.



Step one: Weave the black ribbon around the wreath.

Step Two: Add the freshly plucked leaves also by tucking them among the other greenery. These, being separated from the tree will wither and die slowly. A symbol of where we are at once we have been separated from the life of God.

The final step: Read the story in Scripture found in Genesis 3:6-9 (or all of Genesis chapter 3), Isaiah 64:6, Romans 5:12 (*Collected for you in the accompanying booklet*).

Let this sad part of our human journey linger in your heart awhile and influence how you pray this week.

Week Three Partnership

The world filled with darkness, corruption and violence but God did not give up on humankind. He found people who were still reaching for Him and He reached back to them drawing close and partnering with them to begin the journey of renewing the world He had made, and the image of Himself within broken human hearts.

So we now weave into our story wreath this cord formed of gold and earthy hessian entwined together, like God's heart walking alongside our broken hearts, like God's purposes weaving themselves into human lives. Like God partnering with the threads of a broken humanity to re-weave a whole new story for the human race.

Materials: A Gold ribbon and a natural hessian cord.

Step one: Twist the Gold ribbon and the cord together.

Step two: Weave the twisted cord and ribbon around your wreath.

The final step: Read the story in Scripture found in Genesis 6:9, Genesis 12: 2-3, Hebrews 11:8-9, 24-29. (*Collected for you in the accompanying booklet*).

Let the story travel with you throughout your week reminding you to partner with God in all the small moments and large challenges of life.



Week Four Arrival

After wrestling centuries of God's walk with Israel, with a broken humankind, God comes to earth as a vulnerable human baby, born into all the brokenness that has become the human story. Emmanuel means God is with us. He has arrived! History is divided by this moment into BC and AD. This moment when God Himself came to earth to dwell among us. To be close. As was His plan all along.



So let's add a subtle touch of Christmas to our wreath and celebrate the presence of God with us on earth.

Materials: A subtle touch of Christmas: Stars, Holly, beads, bells or something else that reminds you of Christmas. Try and keep it subtle. Christmas is part of the story, not the whole.

Step one: Twist or weave your touches of Christmas into your wreath.

The final step: Read the story in Scripture found in 'Matthew 1:23, Luke 1: 26-38, Luke 2: 1-21 (Collected for you in the accompanying booklet).

Carry the truth of this into your heart this week: God is with us! His presence is with you. There is nothing you face this week that you will face alone. He is with you. Emmanuel. God with us.

Week Five Seeds of a Kingdom Come



Jesus begins spreading the good good good news of God's reign on earth, the wonderful wonder-filled news of God's Kingdom arriving. He spreads the word through teachings, parables, miracles and miraculous healings, giving people a glimpse of what life is like when God reigns on earth, and inviting them to live under His good rule.

So let's decorate your wreath with seeds and seed pods to symbolise the early scattering of God's word through Jesus Ministry. Jesus used stories of seeds to describe what the Kingdom of God was like. A Kingdom that starts small, but is brimming with life, life that grows and flourishes and produces yet more abundant life.

Materials: Seeds and seed pods. Eucalyptus seed pods, anise stars, cardamom seeds, sunflower seeds. Craft glue, string and ribbon if needed.

Step one: If your seeds are clustered on a twig like eucalyptus seeds are then simply weave these into the wreath, poking them between the foliage.

If the seeds are loose, sew or glue them onto string or ribbon. Allow to dry and then weave this around your wreath.

The final step: Read the story in Scripture found in Luke 16:16, Mark 1:14-15, Mark 4:30-32, Matthew 5:1-16 (Collected for you in the accompanying booklet).

Mull over these stories this week. What does it look like when God's Kingdom comes?

Week Six Buds and Early Fruits of a Kingdom Advancing

The news of God's advancing Kingdom is growing and spreading and many people are joining Jesus on His long walk. His disciples are learning that this Kingdom looks very different to any other ruling regime on earth. Jesus mentors them and then sends them out to 'practice'. Jesus' ministry is bearing fruit in people's lives as they are transformed by His presence and then go out to share the good news with their communities.



So let's decorate your wreath with buds and/or berries to symbolise the early budding of a Kingdom being born and the nourishing of people as they are drawn into it by Jesus.

Materials: Foliage with buds on it plastic or real (wrap the ends in damp tissue paper and foil to keep them alive if they are real). Berries or small fruits.

Step one: Tie or weave your buds and berries into your wreath.

The final step: Read the story in Scripture found in Luke 10:1-24, John 4:1-42, John 15:1-18 (*Collected for you in the accompanying booklet*).

As you journey through this week reflect on the ways God is growing Kingdom fruit in your life.

Week Seven Our King Who Wears a Crown of Thorns

Jesus long journey to the cross has finally come to a head. This is the moment we most clearly see the face of God, our true and loving King, our heavenly Father. His love and justice collide in this week when He chose us. Chose to give us life by paying our debt to death Himself.

So weave both a red and a royal purple ribbon or cord around your wreath this week. Red as the colour of His sacrifice and Royal purple as the colour of His Kingship over heaven and earth. Add thorns too if you wish, to remind you of the crown He wore.



Materials: Royal Purple and Red ribbon or cord. A ring of thorns (optional).

Step one: Weave the ribbons around the wreath. Carefully add the ring of thorns if you are including it.

The final step: Read the story in Scripture found in John 18:33-40, John 19:1-30, Daniel 7:13-14 (*Collected for you in the accompanying booklet*).

Carry the story of the crucifixion in your heart this week, try also reading it in all four gospels.

Week Eight *New Life and New Creation*

Eternal life begins now! Because of all Jesus has done through the cross, we now have the opportunity to receive back the breath of life that was our original inheritance as children of God. Today is a day to celebrate! In Christ Jesus we are made new, the past no longer has to decide our future. The free gift of His new creation life is readily available to us now.

So let's decorate our story wreath with as many fresh living, flourishing thriving things as possible!

Materials: Fresh flowers, Greenery, Butterflies, decorative eggs.

Step one: Decorate your wreath with as many fresh living things as possible! Fill it with fresh flowers and foliage. Add paper butterflies or eggs. Anything that says 'life' to you.

The final step: Read the story in Scripture found in Job 19:25, John 20:1-18, Revelation 5:1-10, 2 Corinthians 5:17 (*Collected for you in the accompanying booklet*).

This is the week to celebrate. Hold a party, a meal with family or friends and retrace the long story of Easter through your wreath with them inviting them into the long story of grace. Walk into this week smiling, dancing and rejoicing because God is with us! He has done all that is necessary for us to be with Him. Forever begins now!

