

**April: Walk in Love Because Your Savior
Gave His Life for You
Maggie Jones**



Verse:

And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. 2 Corinthians 5:15 (ESV)

Upward Gaze:

Heavenly Father, You gave to us the greatest gift, Your Son Jesus Christ. We could never earn it nor do we deserve what He did for us. We are sinners, but through Jesus we have been given the gift of eternal life. Help us each day to remember this gift and not take for granted what our Savior did for us on the cross. In Christ's most holy and precious name, Amen.

Development of Theme:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (John 3:16 – 17 NKJV)

These above two verses sum up what God did for us because He loves us. He wanted us to be able to have a relationship with Him, so He made a way for us.

You might remember the movie “The Passion of the Christ”. It was released in February 2004. We immediately bought the DVD, but I kept on finding excuses to not watch the movie. Each year I would tell myself this Easter I'm going to finally watch this movie. Years went by and still I still did not.

Let me explain my resistance. Anytime I read a book, I create the characters' appearances. We create the scene based on the description. In my mind, I can filter the image to be something I can tolerate. Then the movie comes out. It is nothing like what my mind had created. Do I either love the book and hate the movie or do I hate the book and love the movie.

Growing up, or even as an adult I have this image of Jesus. He is always surrounded by children. He is wearing a clean white robe with a blue sash. His skin is flawless. There is also the image of Him hanging from a cross. Even then He isn't gushing with blood. You don't see the deep wounds from the whips. It's a drop of blood from His hands, feet, head, and side. These were the images in my head.

I've read the Bible, from cover to cover many times. I've read what they did to our Lord and Savior. But can I handle seeing what they truly did to him? It's not going to be the nursery story version. My answer was no for so many years. Finally, in 2011 I watched the movie. And I saw what I already knew, The truth, of what I already knew, was presented before me in a way that I will never forget. I know that they were actors but these scenes were real. They were based off a true story. The anger, hatred, cruelty portrayed on the faces of those beating Jesus, crying out for Him to be crucified made me sick.

You can't watch this movie and not realize what Jesus did for us. He gave His life, a living sacrifice, for us. He was without sin. Yet, He willingly chose to take upon Himself the sin of the world.

When we are cruel to people, gossip about people, judge people, look the other way when people are in need, we are forgetting what Jesus did for us. He died for us. We may be grateful for what He did, but not allow it to change my life,

When we look at people we need to see them through new glasses, glasses that show us Jesus dying for them. Then we can see what the need is in a person's life.

Loving like Jesus is not easy or for the faint hearted. It's a lifetime commitment. It's diligently and consistently keeping yourself in check. We must be in constant communication with Jesus to love like Him.

No one person is a better Christian than the other. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23 NKJV). Jesus paid it all for all. Don't compare yourselves to other Christians. You are to imitate Jesus. He will show you how to do so if you ask Him.

Inward Glimpse (Reflection):

We are daily in need of a Savior. Ask God to reveal areas that you need to be working on to love others like Jesus. Ask that your heart be softened to those around you. Spend time in prayer and scripture pouring over Jesus' life and how it applies to your life.

Outward Glance (Discussion):

Have a movie night and watch "The Passion of the Christ" together as a group. Share with one another how knowing what Jesus did for you impacts your day-to-day life and decisions. Share how this affects the way you pray. Think of ways that you can spread the gospel in your community. Look into your women's group starting an Evangelism Explosion program. Write out invitations to attend church. Announce to the congregation that you have invitations for people to take to neighbors, co-workers, family, etc. Let them know that you would be willing to mail the invitation to whomever they would like you to.

One more peek:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."
John 14:6 NKJV

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 1:3 - 5