



BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Back to the Garden

An Easter Study in Five Sessions

"Not my will, but yours be done." — Luke 22:42

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed for small groups or personal study over five sessions, each built around one theme from the Easter blog post "Back to the Garden." Each session includes:

- A key Scripture passage to read aloud together
- A short context note with cultural or historical background
- Discussion questions (aim for 3–4 per session; not all need to be used)
- A personal reflection prompt to take home
- A closing prayer focus

Sessions run 45–60 minutes comfortably. Don't rush the discussion questions — silence is okay. Let the Spirit lead.

SESSION ONE

Two Gardens, One Story

Genesis 3:1–8 | Romans 5:12–19 | Luke 22:39–44

Open in Prayer

Invite someone to open with a brief prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to make Scripture come alive during your time together.

Read Together

Read Genesis 3:1–6 and Romans 5:17–19 aloud. Take turns or designate one reader.

"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it."

— **Genesis 3:6**

"For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous."

— **Romans 5:19**

Context Note

The Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane form a deliberate biblical bookend. Paul's language in Romans 5 of the "second Adam" is precise theology: where the first man disobeyed in a garden, the second man chose obedience in a garden. This is not poetic coincidence — it is the architecture of redemption.

Gethsemane (from the Aramaic *gat shemanim*, "oil press") was an olive grove on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. Olive presses crushed olives under enormous weight to release their oil. The irony of Jesus bearing the weight of the world in a place literally named for crushing is not lost on careful readers.

Discussion Questions

1. What strikes you most about the parallel between Eden and Gethsemane? Does it feel intentional to you? Why or why not?
2. Adam and Eve had everything and still chose their own will. Jesus had every reason to choose his own will — and didn't. What do you think made the difference?
3. Romans 5 talks about how one man's obedience can reverse what one man's disobedience broke. Where do you see evidence of that reversal in your own life?
4. The name "oil press" carries real weight. What has been an "oil press" season in your own life — a time of being pressed — and what came out of it?

Personal Reflection

Where in your own life have you chosen your own garden over God's?

Take a few minutes to write or pray about what it would look like to let Jesus' obedience be the pattern for that area.

Closing Prayer Focus

Thank God for his intentionality — that redemption was not an afterthought but a plan. Pray for eyes to see the patterns of Scripture.

SESSION TWO

The Most Human Moment

Luke 22:39–46 | Hebrews 4:14–16 | Matthew 26:36–44

Open in Prayer

Ask God to help the group sit with discomfort honestly — that this session is about struggle, and that's okay.

Read Together

Read Luke 22:39–46 slowly. Ask someone to read it a second time.

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done. An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."

— Luke 22:42–44

Context Note

The medical phenomenon described in Luke 22:44 — sweat like drops of blood — is called hematidrosis. It has been documented in cases of extreme psychological stress, where capillaries beneath the skin rupture and mix with sweat. Luke, writing as a physician (Colossians 4:14), chose this detail carefully. This was not dramatic storytelling; it was clinical observation.

Jesus prayed the same prayer three times (Matthew 26:44). In Jewish tradition, repeating something three times signals its absolute seriousness. He was not performing anguish. He was in it.

Yet he knew everything — that Judas had already betrayed him (John 13:21–27), that the soldiers were coming, that the law required his sacrifice. His asking was not confusion. It was humanity.

Discussion Questions

5. Does it surprise you that Jesus asked three times for another way? Does it comfort you, disturb you, or something else?
6. Hebrews 4:15 says Jesus was “tempted in every way, just as we are, yet he did not sin.” How does seeing Jesus’ anguish in Gethsemane change how you approach your own suffering or doubt?
7. An angel came and strengthened him — not to remove the suffering, but to help him endure it. Have you ever experienced that kind of strengthening? What did it look like?

8. Jesus ended his prayer with “not my will, but yours.” What is something in your life right now that you are still trying to bend toward your own will rather than God’s?

Personal Reflection

What is your "cup" right now — the thing you've asked God to take away more than once? Spend time writing an honest prayer about it, ending with whatever posture you can genuinely offer: "not my will, but yours." Even if you're not fully there yet, write it honestly.

Closing Prayer Focus

Pray for each other's "cups" — if the group is comfortable, share one thing you're carrying. Then pray together that God would send angels to strengthen, not necessarily remove.

SESSION THREE

The Flesh Is Weak

Matthew 26:36–41 | Romans 7:15–25 | Romans 8:1

Open in Prayer

Ask God to give the group honesty and grace with one another — this session is about our weakness, and that requires safety.

Read Together

Read Matthew 26:40–41, then Romans 7:15–19.

"He returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.""

— **Matthew 26:40–41**

"For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing."

— **Romans 7:18–19**

Context Note

The disciples didn't fall asleep because they didn't care. Luke 22:45 adds a detail Matthew omits: they were "exhausted from sorrow." Grief is exhausting. They had just heard Jesus say one of them would betray him, that he was leaving, that hard things were coming. Their bodies gave out under the weight of it.

Jesus' response is striking. He doesn't shame them. He names the truth — the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak — and then gives them direction: watch and pray. The antidote to weak flesh is not willpower. It's prayer. Bringing the weakness to the Father rather than trying to overcome it alone.

Discussion Questions

9. Have you ever been so heavy with grief or stress that your body just gave out? How do you feel about the disciples after knowing they were "exhausted from sorrow"?
10. Paul's confession in Romans 7 is raw and honest: I do the things I don't want to do. Can you relate? Where do you feel that gap most in your own life?
11. Jesus says the antidote is "watch and pray" — not "try harder." What does it practically look like for you to bring your weakness to God in prayer rather than white-knuckling it?

12. Our holiness is declared (Romans 8:1 — no condemnation) but still being refined. How do you hold those two things together? Does one feel more real to you than the other?

Personal Reflection

Where are you relying on willpower instead of prayer?

Write out the area of weakness, then write a simple, honest prayer bringing it to Abba Father.

Remember: he already knows. You're not informing him — you're positioning yourself.

Closing Prayer Focus

Pray specifically against shame. Remind each other: weakness acknowledged before God is not failure — it is faithfulness. Close with Romans 8:1 spoken aloud together.

SESSION FOUR

Remember — Actually Remember

Exodus 12:1–14 | 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 | Deuteronomy 16:1–3

Open in Prayer

Ask God to give the group a fresh sense of what Easter actually is — to strip away the familiar and let it land like the first time.

Read Together

Read Exodus 12:11–14, then 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.

"This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord — a lasting ordinance."

— Exodus 12:14

"In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

— 1 Corinthians 11:25–26

Context Note

The Jewish Passover Seder is one of the most carefully preserved remembrance rituals in human history. The Haggadah (the Passover text read at the Seder) says each participant must see themselves as personally leaving Egypt — not "our ancestors did," but "we did." The point of Passover was never historical memory. It was participatory memory.

Jesus celebrated Passover with his disciples the night of his arrest (the Last Supper is a Seder meal). When he took the cup and said "do this in remembrance of me," he was doing something his Jewish disciples would have immediately understood: he was making Easter into a living Passover. Not a one-time event to remember once a year, but a story to inhabit again and again.

Discussion Questions

13. How is your family or church currently celebrating Easter? Does it feel more like a remembrance or more like a holiday? No judgment — just honest reflection.
14. The Passover isn't just remembered — it's participated in. What would it look like for your Easter celebration to be participatory, not just observational?
15. What story from Jesus' death and resurrection do you almost never tell? Who in your life needs to hear part of this story from you?

16. If Easter is our Passover — the moment the angel passed over us — what does that make you feel? Gratitude? Unworthiness? Something else?

Personal Reflection

What is one concrete way you will tell the Easter story this year?

It could be to your kids, a family member, a friend who doesn't know Jesus, or even just a journal entry. Write out what you'd say.

Closing Prayer Focus

Thank God for being a God of memory and covenant. Ask him to rekindle the weight of Easter in your heart before Sunday comes.

SESSION FIVE

All the Prodigal Sons, Coming Home

Luke 15:11–32 | John 21:15–17 | Romans 8:31–39

Open in Prayer

Ask God to help the group receive what Easter is actually offering — restoration, not just forgiveness. They're related but not the same.

Read Together

Read Luke 15:20–24, then John 21:15–17.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

— **Luke 15:20**

"When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'"

— **John 21:15–17**

Context Note

The restoration of Peter in John 21 is one of the most intentional scenes in all of Scripture. Peter denied Jesus three times the night of his arrest — specifically around a charcoal fire (John 18:18). In John 21:9, another charcoal fire is mentioned: the only two times this specific Greek word (*anthrakia*) appears in the New Testament. Jesus wasn't just having breakfast. He was deliberately recreating the scene of failure — and replacing it with restoration.

Three denials. Three questions. Three commissions: feed my lambs, take care of my sheep, feed my sheep. Jesus doesn't erase what Peter did. He overwrites it with purpose.

This is Easter. Not just "your sins are forgiven" but "now feed my sheep." Restoration to relationship and to mission.

Discussion Questions

17. The father in the prodigal son parable runs down the road while the son is "still a long way off." What does it mean to you that God moves toward us before we arrive?
18. Jesus meets Peter at a charcoal fire — the same setting as his denial — and restores him there. Is there a "charcoal fire" in your past that you've been avoiding? What would restoration look like there?

19. "Feed my sheep" is a commission, not a compliment. How does Easter call you to action? What sheep are you being asked to feed?
20. The older brother in Luke 15 stayed home and was still lost. Is there any way you have been near the Father but not actually in the celebration? What would it look like to step into the party?

Personal Reflection

What is one area of your life where you have received forgiveness but not yet restoration?

Write a prayer asking for the full thing — not just pardon, but the robe, the ring, the sandals, the party.

Closing Prayer

End this final session by praying together as people who have been brought home. Go around the group: each person finishes the sentence "Thank you, Father, for..." Then close with someone reading Romans 8:38–39 over the group as a benediction.

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

— **Romans 8:38–39**

Scripture Reference List

All passages used across the five sessions, for personal study or group preparation:

Session 1 — Two Gardens, One Story

- Genesis 3:1–8 — The Fall
- Romans 5:12–19 — The Second Adam
- Luke 22:39–44 — Jesus in the Garden

Session 2 — The Most Human Moment

- Luke 22:39–46
- Matthew 26:36–44
- Hebrews 4:14–16 — Jesus our High Priest

Session 3 — The Flesh Is Weak

- Matthew 26:36–41
- Romans 7:15–25
- Romans 8:1 — No condemnation

Session 4 — Remember, Actually Remember

- Exodus 12:1–14 — Passover instructions
- Deuteronomy 16:1–3 — Remember the exodus
- 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 — The Lord's Supper

Session 5 — All the Prodigal Sons, Coming Home

- Luke 15:11–32 — The Prodigal Son
- John 21:15–17 — Restoration of Peter
- Romans 8:31–39 — Nothing can separate us

"Not my will, but yours be done."

Luke 22:42

He is risen.

Based on the back to the Garden Devotional post

On

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