



**PLEASE**

**SORRY**

**THANKS**

Devotional Guide



For use on the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of Holy Week.

*Prepare your heart for Easter.*

Based on the book *Please, Sorry, Thanks* by Mark Batterson

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# MAUNDY THURSDAY

*April 6, 2023*

## **PLEASE:**

**Today's reading:** Matthew 7:7–12

## **Today's verse:**

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

—Matthew 7:7

When Christian Herter was governor of Massachusetts, he stopped by a church barbecue after a long day on the campaign trail. As he made his way down the serving line, he asked whether he could have a second piece of chicken.

The woman serving the chicken said, “Sorry. Only one to a customer.”

Governor Herter was a humble man, but he was also hungry. “Do you know who I am? I’m the governor of the state.”

Without skipping a beat, the woman replied, “Do you know who I am? I’m the lady in charge of the chicken. Move along, mister!”

Demands come across as entitled, governor or not. A simple *please* levels the playing field. It will get you further than your title, your rank, or your credentials.

To be authentic, though, the word *please* requires a posture of humility. Thankfully, on the original Maundy Thursday, Jesus gave an unforgettable lesson in humility. He washed the disciples’ feet—an unpleasant task usually left to the person of lowest status in a household (John 13:1–17).



“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher,” He said, “have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet” (verse 14). All of Jesus’s followers are to be people of humility. Being humble motivates us when we make our requests using, *please*. This isn’t a demand, it’s an ask.

And there’s a reason *please* is called a “magic word.” It opens doors like none other! Nothing defuses defense mechanisms like a *pretty please*. When arising out of a genuine humility, nothing gets results like *pretty please*.

This is true whether we’re asking something of other people or asking something of God. *Please* is our Trojan horse, in a sense. Instead of knocking down doors with a battering ram, we ask, seek, and knock.

The verbs “ask,” “seek,” and “knock” in today’s verse are present-tense imperative verbs in the language they were written in. That is, you never arrive! You *keep* asking, *keep* seeking, *keep* knocking.

So, in the spirit of Maundy Thursday, check your heart to see if you find entitlement there, or humility. Work on being the kind of person others want to cooperate with, not because they feel they must, but because they’re drawn to your meekness.

And even though God invites us to seek Him boldly in prayer, it’s good to realize that we have in no way earned this access. We have it as a gift of grace from Jesus, our Lord and Teacher. Even in prayer it is appropriate to mix humility with our boldness.

Say please.

**Prayer:**

*God, lead me to become more like your Son in humility, kindness, and love.*

*Help me to always respect others and to never cease worshiping you.*



# GOOD FRIDAY

*April 7, 2023*

## **SORRY:**

**Today's reading:** Matthew 18:21–35

**Today's verses:**

“Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

—Matthew 18:21–22

In one season of life and ministry, I was so pressed by my responsibilities as a pastor that I let a few of my priorities get out of whack. I'm embarrassed to admit this, but I was too busy to be bothered by family problems. That caused a deep wound for my wife, Lora.

During a day of prayer many years later, the Holy Spirit surfaced that moment, that memory.

With tears in her eyes, Lora said, “I forgive you.” There is something about saying sorry that heals painful memories.

Lora needed to say it, and I needed to hear it. It didn't change the mistakes I'd made, but it brought tremendous healing. And, I might add, a renewed resolve to be fully present for my family, regardless of how busy I got.

It's been said before, and it's true: hurt people hurt people. And to compound the problem, instead of dealing with their hurt, they repress it. Repression is like trying to keep a fully inflated beach ball beneath the surface of the water. Those repressed feelings will surface sooner or later, usually at the most inopportune time.

We have to cast our cares on God. Confession lets the air out of those emotions—it's letting go and letting God forgive us. Then we return the favor by forgiving others.



We say sorry to God when we've offended His holiness and His love for us by disobeying Him. We say sorry to others when we've done harm to them. And when others say sorry to us, we graciously accept it.

The bottom line? Forgiven people forgive people, not seven times in a row (which seemed like plenty to Peter and would to most people) but *seventy-seven times*, effectively an infinite number of times.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant—Jesus's explanation of the shocking “seventy-seven times” thing—has an obvious and profound point. We should forgive the comparatively petty offenses others commit against us because God has forgiven the immense debt of our own sin (Matthew 18:23–35).

Today, on Good Friday, I hope you will go to church and listen to the story of Christ's Passion, or sit and read it from any of the Gospels, meditating deeply on it. Here is the most tragic and the greatest story there is. This Friday is Good because by it we receive the means to be delivered from the darkness of sin to the light of grace.

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul capsulized the gospel: “In [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us” (1:7–8). A little later in the same letter, he drew the logical conclusion: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (4:32).

Sorry is the gateway to a life set right.

**Prayer:**

*Give me the courage to go to someone I've hurt, look them in the eye, and say, “I'm sorry.” And give me the faith to forgive someone else, even if it's the seventy-seventh time.*



# HOLY SATURDAY

*April 8, 2023*

## THANKS:

**Today's reading:** Colossians 3:15–17

**Today's verse:** “Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

—Colossians 3:17

I recently read a book by A. J. Jacobs titled *Thanks a Thousand*. He decided to thank every person who made his morning cup of coffee possible. And no, he didn't just mean the barista who pulls shots or makes French press coffee. There is quite a supply chain behind every cup of coffee, which starts with coffee farmers but also includes truck drivers, warehouse supervisors, forklift operators, and coffee roasters. Jacobs ended up thanking at least 964 people!

Today, my recommendation is that you take on your own gratitude project. You don't have to delve back in the supply chain of every product you benefit from. But how about being alert to every little kindness or service someone does for you in person today—and say thanks?

*Thank you for helping me make it to work on time after I'd overslept.*

*Thank you for the bright way you show up for meetings.*

*Thank you for bringing our lunch so promptly.*

*Thank you, thank you, thank you.*

And while you're at it, do your best to notice as many things as you can that you should thank God for. Because as we see in today's Bible reading from Colossians, praise and thanks to the Lord are to be woven into every part of our life. At home, at work, out and about—wherever—there's so much to be thankful to God for.



The difficulty here is that the blessings of God surround us so completely, all the time, that we become blind to them. We need to have our eyes reopened to the world of wonders we live in.

Picture a man who has lived his entire life in a cave, then steps outside for the first time and witnesses the sunrise. That caveman would watch with rapt astonishment the sight we daily witness with indifference!

The theology of *thanks* starts with the things we take for granted. It's cultivating profound gratitude for the things we overlook and underappreciate. The sunrise ranks right up there. And that's just the beginning of the day!

The Saturday before Easter is not an "off" day in the schedule of Holy Week. It's a day of anticipation. It's a day for getting ready to sing, celebrate, and renew our wonder. Because, if ever there were something to be thrilled and grateful for, it's resurrection life in Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul gives a detailed theology of resurrection. First, he demonstrates how Jesus's own resurrection was firmly established as historical fact by eyewitnesses. Then he describes how, because Jesus rose from the grave, so His followers are to be raised to life after death.

Paul soars to the climax of the chapter by saying, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (verses 56–57).

Thanks be to God!

**Prayer:**

*Remind me, Lord, to crown every good deed someone does for me with a word of thanks. And teach me to make praise and thanks the theme of my life—now and in the life to come.*



