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youth connecting **faith & life**

A Parade of Palms

Each year Christians celebrate Palm Sunday on the Sunday before Easter. On this day we remember Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, an event documented in all four Gospels. In many churches, palm branches are distributed to remind us of the branches that were laid on the ground in front of Jesus as he rode into town. Those who do not have easy access to such branches often use boughs from other native trees in their area.

Traditions From Around the World

People have been observing Palm Sunday since the ninth century. Across the globe, celebrations of this holiday have taken many different forms. In several countries Christians take the festivities to the streets, waving branches as spiritual leaders process down the main roads in town. In Poland they host competitions of crafts made from artificial palms. Indian Orthodox churches scatter flowers in their sanctuaries as the gospel story is read. Finnish children dress up and go door to door asking for coins and candy while waving willow branches and giving Easter blessings.

A Call to Humility

While Palm Sunday celebrations can be exciting and rather elaborate, it is also a day that reminds us of Jesus' humility. Jesus' rode into Jerusalem on a lowly donkey. The grand parade shows how the citizens regarded him as royalty. He was considered to be the King of the Jews. However, most kings would have entered town riding a majestic horse. Instead, Jesus chose a donkey, a symbol of his humility.

It's Not All About Me

Brain research indicates that young adolescents engage in self-oriented thought when making decisions. As they mature into young adulthood, they begin to use the area of the brain associated with the perspectives of others. We can help teens make the shift from me-centered thinking to others-centered



thinking by talking about—and modeling—Jesus' example of humble servanthood that he exhibited not just on Palm Sunday but throughout his entire ministry.

Tip for This Issue

The story of Jesus' triumphal entry is documented in all four Gospels (see Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-44, John 12:12-16). You may want to take time to compare and contrast these different accounts. All of the Gospels record that the crowd shouted, "Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" The people were expecting Jesus to be a powerful leader who had come to restore their nation. When Jesus did not fulfill these expectations, many turned against him.

Teacher Bible Prep

HUMBLE THYSELF

PURPOSE: To encourage teens to follow Christ's example of humility.

QUESTION OF THE DAY: If Jesus entered your community today, how would the people respond?

CULTURAL CONNECTION: Palm Sunday

TOPIC: The Humility of Christ

Signed in Blood Zechariah 9:9-13

Look, your king will come to you. He is righteous and victorious. He is humble and riding on an ass, on a colt, the offspring of a donkey. —Zechariah 9:9b

Commentary:

Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem was foretold by Zechariah over five hundred years before the event occurred. God made a covenant, or promise, with God's people that was confirmed with blood. In ancient times, written covenants literally were sealed with blood, similar to how we write our signature on contracts today. During this upcoming Holy Week, we remember that Jesus signed the new covenant with his blood, promising to forgive our sins and bring salvation. This is not a promise to be taken lightly. Jesus died so that we may live. Just as the prophet Zechariah did, we can share this good news with others.

Questions to think about:

- Who, do you think, are the prophets who speak for God today? Do any of the teens in your group have a prophetic voice?
- What leadership qualities of Zion's king do you wish to cultivate in your life?
- What promise do you want to make to God as a sign of your commitment to share the good news?

Hosanna! Matthew 21:1-11

The crowds in front of him and behind him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" —Matthew 21:9



As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowd cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David."

Commentary:

Hosanna is a Hebrew term derived from a combination of the Hebrew words *yashna* ("to save") and *na* (an expression of request). As the crowd cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were acknowledging that Jesus had the power to save them and pleading that he would rescue them from the Romans.

Hosanna is also an expression of joy and praise. Though the crowd exalted Jesus when he entered Jerusalem, this same crowd fell to political pressure and abandoned him only a few days later. Despite their rejection, Jesus still went to the cross on their behalf, ultimately fulfilling their requests for salvation by laying down his life for theirs.

Questions to think about:

- How did Jesus ride into your life? As a gentle king bringing peace? As a knight who came to rescue you?
- Have you ever praised Jesus one day only to reject him the next?
- Do you know someone who is in need of the saving power of Christ? Will you pray for this person this week?

A Servant King Philippians 2:1-11

Don't do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves. —Philippians 2:3

Teacher Bible Prep

Commentary:

Many people define *humility* as putting down oneself. Too often this leads to a full denial of a person's abilities and gifts and results in low self-esteem. Being humble actually means having a genuine perception of ourselves without thinking too highly or lowly of our capabilities. With an honest view of whom we are, Paul then prompts us to consider others' interests as more important than our own. When we do this, we are connected to Christ, a true example of humility. Jesus had a servant's heart, doing whatever he could to bring wholeness to others.

Kings have a reputation of being pompous, never missing an opportunity to flaunt their dignity or importance. This was not the case for Jesus. As the King of kings, he humbled himself before others, even to the point of death. He did this to obey God and serve people.

Questions to think about:

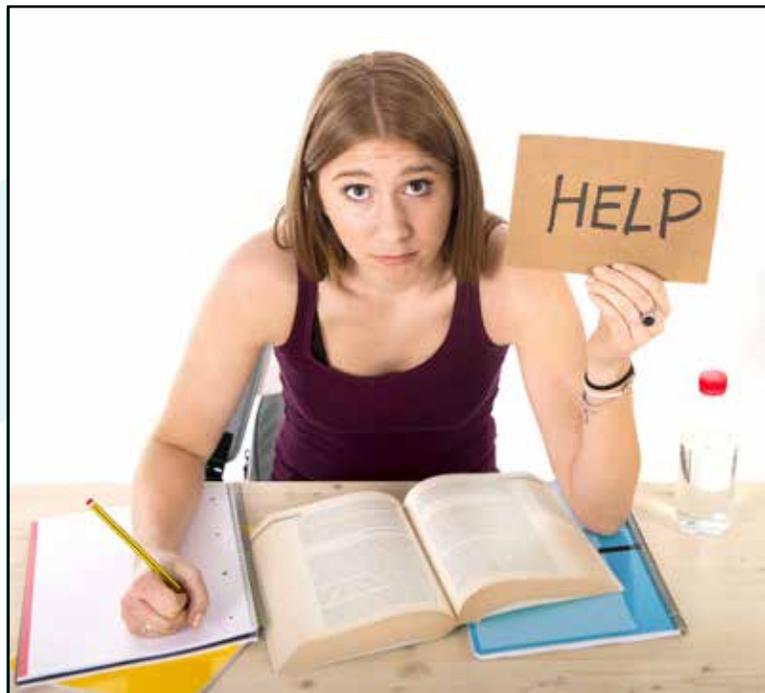
- Do you struggle with pride? What is one step you can take this week toward living a more humble life?
- Have you hurt someone due to a selfish act? Do you need to ask for forgiveness?
- How can you serve others this week with the attitude of Christ?

DEVOTION: TAKE MY ADVICE

Read Proverbs 13.

The Book of Proverbs contains many strong and candid statements contrasting pride and humility. Proverbs 13:10 reads, "The empty-headed cause conflict out of pride; those who take advice are wise." Pride plays a part in almost every quarrel. It provokes disagreement and causes a rift between people. Humility, on the other hand, can bring healing and unity.

Three of the toughest words to say are, "I need help." When we ask for help, we must humble ourselves and admit personal weakness or lack of knowledge. In a competitive society, none of us wants to reveal that we aren't strong or smart enough to be successful. We would rather struggle with something alone than ask for advice or assistance. However, Proverbs 13:10 teaches that it is wise to request guidance from others. Not only will we accomplish the task more efficiently but also we acknowledge that we are not perfect and we cannot possibly know everything. Humbling ourselves will make us more like Christ and draw us closer to him.



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NEXT WEEK: Next week is Easter—a time for celebration! But for longtime Christians, somehow even Easter can lose its excitement. LINC takes a fresh look at Easter, hoping to reengage the minds of your teens (and you!) in this transforming and celebratory Sunday!

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Writer: Tiffany Manning

Editor: Kevin Alton (kevin@circuitwritermedia.com)

Managing Editor: Jack Radcliffe (jradcliffe@umpublishing.org)

Production Editor: Pam Shepherd

(pshepherd@umpublishing.org)

Template Designer: Ken Strickland

Swallow Your Pride

GETTING READY: You will need copies of Youth Page 6, pens or pencils, Bibles, a roll of duct or masking tape, a large sheet of paper, a marker, blank writing paper, unsharpened or dull pencils, and a pencil sharpener.

OPEN

Heehaw Hoopla

(10 minutes)

Say: "Today we're going to explore the story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In this story Jesus rode into town on a donkey as a symbol of his humility."

Introduce the game Heehaw Hoopla. In this game a volunteer will do his or her best donkey impression, trying to make at least one other member of the group laugh. If she or he cannot cause another person to laugh within 30 seconds, invite another teen to try. Continue play until students no longer wish to volunteer. Talk about the following questions:

- If Jesus were entering your town while riding in a parade next weekend, what arrangements would you make in order to publicize the event?
- What plans would you make for his meals and lodging?
- Would the local news media react positively or negatively? Would the parade be televised or kept private?
- How would the community respond to Jesus' visit, do you think? Would he be welcomed with open arms or would there be protests in the streets?

EXPLORE

Talk Topic 1: The Prophecy Foretold

(15 minutes)

Middle School Option

Explain that teens will play a game called Pass the Crown. The object of the game is for teenagers to pass a roll of tape

down the line, transferring it to each person's head, as if it were a crown, without using hands or dropping it. If the roll drops, the person who was previously balancing the "crown" can put it back on his or her head using hands. Ask teens to stand in a line. Give the person at the front of the line the roll of tape to place on his or her head and begin.

After completing the game, say: "Jesus' entry to Jerusalem was predicted hundreds of years before it happened. Let's read about how the coming king was described by the prophet Zechariah." Read aloud Zechariah 9:9-13, then talk about the following questions:

- What will be the characteristics of Zion's king? Do any of these characteristics sound like they describe Jesus?
- The prophet indicates that the coming of the king will be a time of celebration. What happened in your life this week that is cause for rejoicing?

High School Option

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Zechariah 9:9-13, then ask and talk about the following questions:

- What qualities do you look for in a leader? How do these qualities compare to Zion's coming king?
- What will it take for Jesus' rule to "stretch from sea to sea" (9:10c) in today's world?
- How do you live in a way that promotes peace in your school or community?

Say, "In biblical times, covenants, like contracts, were signed with blood symbolizing agreement." Encourage teens to make a covenant with one another to encourage peace within the group. Brainstorm ways that teenagers will agree to behave in order to promote harmony and list on a large sheet of paper with a suitable title. Then ask each teen to sign the covenant chart as a sign of commitment to peace. Display the covenant in your meeting space as a reminder for teens to "keep the peace."

Talk Topic 2: The Prophecy Fulfilled

(20 minutes)

Middle School Option

Ask, "Who considers themselves to be a sports fan?" Invite teens to call out their favorite sports teams. Explain how some people support a particular team regardless of their record, while others are "fair-weather fans" and turn against their favorites during a losing season. Say: "This happened to Jesus also. One day the crowd was praising him and having a parade in his honor. A few days later the same people turned against him and wanted him to be crucified."

Ask someone to read aloud Matthew 21:1-11, then lead a conversation around the following questions:

- What might you have said if you had been one of the disciples Jesus asked to bring him a donkey?

In ancient times, written covenants literally were sealed with blood, similar to how we write our signature on contracts today.



Swallow Your Pride

- Jesus arrived on a donkey—not a stallion like most kings. What does this tell us about Jesus?
- What difference does it make to you that Jesus is a gentle king instead of one who focuses on his authority over others? How does this influence your relationship with him?

Form teams of two or three each and hand out blank writing paper and pens or pencils. Invite teams to compose a chant or song they would shout or sing at a parade being held in Jesus' honor. When teams are ready, call on each to perform its chant or song.

High School Option

Read aloud Matthew 21:1-11, then ask and talk about the following questions:

- Have you ever been in a parade? What was it like?
- If you had been in Jerusalem when Jesus rode into town, what would have been your reaction?
- What was surprising about how Jesus entered Jerusalem?
- Do you readily tell others about who Jesus is and what he means to you? Why or why not?

Talk Topic 3: The Message for Today (15 minutes)

Combined Middle School and High School Option

Give an unsharpened or dull pencil to each person. Ask, "Where is the useful part of this pencil?" (Point out the graphite in the middle.) Explain that to get to the graphite, one must remove the wood from the outside. Compare the pencil to a human heart, describing how pride and selfishness must be removed in order for us to be servants of God with a proper attitude of humility. Invite teens to sharpen their

Think of the pencil as a human heart. Just as the outside wood is removed to reach the useful graphite, pride and selfishness must be removed from our hearts for us to serve God with an attitude of humility.



their pencils, thinking about what self-centered ideas they need to eliminate in order to put others before themselves.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Philippians 2:1-11, then ask the following questions:

- Reading between the lines, what was wrong with the church in Philippi?
- What does it mean to "think of others as better than yourself"?
- What is the difference between humility and being treated as someone else's doormat?
- How does this passage challenge the world's explanation of success?
- Who do you admire because they put the concerns of others before their own concerns?

Hand out copies of Youth Page 6. Remind teens that being humble does not mean completely disregarding oneself. Instead we are to balance meeting our personal needs while also helping to meet the needs of others. Ask students to complete the chart by listing ways they can care for themselves while similarly caring for others.

When most everyone is finished, allow those who are comfortable doing so to talk about the items on their chart.

! BONUS Small Group Discussion Option

Ask for volunteers to read aloud one each of the following verses: Proverbs 11:2; Proverbs 13:10; Proverbs 18:12; and Proverbs 29:23. Then talk about the following questions:

- What do these verses say about pride versus humility?
- When has being proud caused a dispute or conflict in your life?
- Do you find it easy to ask for help, or does your pride sometimes get in the way?
- Share one piece of good advice you have received that has helped guide your daily actions. Who advised you in this way?

TAKE AWAY

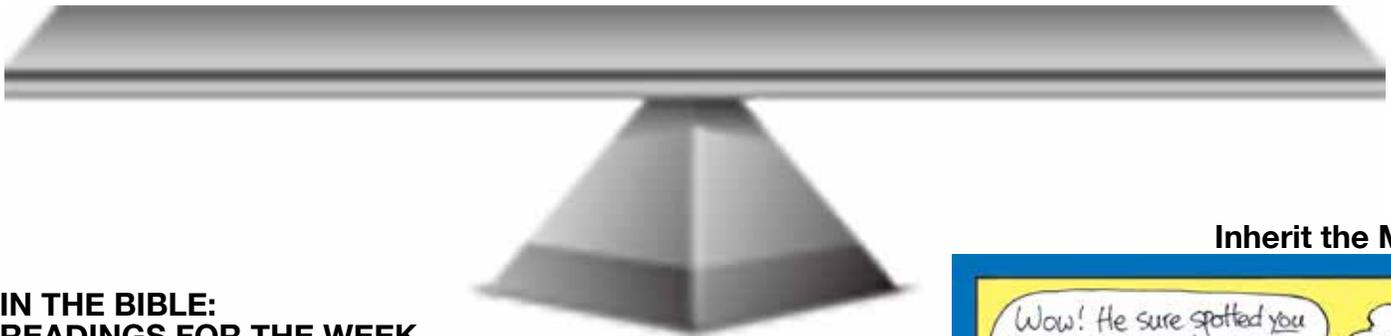
Invite teens to kneel on the floor for a closing prayer exercise. Say: "In the Bible, kneeling is an act of humility and submission, a symbol of giving everything to God and putting God first. Scripture describes Moses, Solomon, Peter, and Paul all bending their knees to pray before God. Ask youth to spend a minute silently praying for God to reveal ways they can put others before themselves. Then say aloud a closing prayer for the group.



Work It Out

How can you balance meeting your own needs while also helping to meet the needs of others? Complete the chart below by listing practical ways you can show humility in caring for others while also taking care of yourself.

MY OWN NEEDS	THE NEEDS OF OTHERS
Eat healthy foods.	Donate healthy foods to a local pantry.



IN THE BIBLE: READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Monday: Read Colossians 3:12-17.
How can you clothe yourself with humility?

Tuesday: Read Titus 3:1-11.
Are you devoted to doing what is good?
Wednesday: Read James 3:13-18.
Is there someone you know who lives a humble lifestyle?

Thursday: Read 1 Peter 5:5-11.
How is submitting to those who are older a sign of humility?

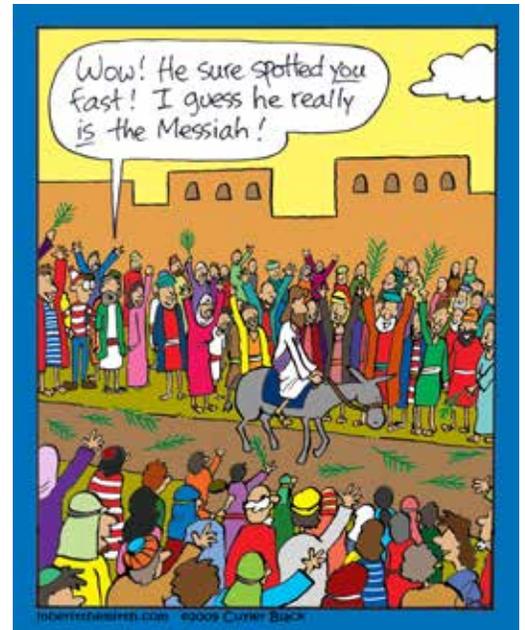
Friday: Read James 4:1-12.
What worldly things are keeping you from submitting yourself fully to God?
Saturday: Read Matthew 23:1-12.
To Jesus, greatness comes from serving. How will you serve Jesus in the week ahead?



*The empty-headed cause conflict out of pride;
those who take advice are wise.*

—Proverbs 13:10

Inherit the Mirth



WHAT'S TRENDING?

When have you taken a backseat to your own pride? Tweet or post your response using #meekandmild to @AbingdonYouth or on Facebook: Abingdon Youth