

*Blessed*

TO BE A

*Blessing*

30 DAILY DEVOTIONS



**EASTER DEVOTIONAL**

# Blessed to be a Blessing

Thank you for your support of our church partners. Your support is a blessing to their ministry. We'd like to bless your walk with Jesus this Easter season. We hope this short devotional will draw you closer to him.

Use this 30-day Devotional resource during the Easter season. The studies focus on scripture, action and reflection, to help draw you closer to God as you unpack the Easter story. Scan the QR codes to watch videos telling the stories of some of our international church partners.

The resources can be used for small groups, included in church services or reflections, or be used as an individual devotion resource.

We hope it will bless your walk with Jesus, and draw you into his love and the hope we find in his resurrection.

Yours in Christ,

*Craig Brown,*  
Director of International Church Partnerships



# Go Further

There are a few things you can do to further this study and be Blessed to be a Blessing to people around the world.

## Further Actions

### Take Part in the Walk for Hope Offering

Many of our partners face the challenge of limited resources to grow their churches. They may need money to build church buildings, pay for petrol to reach rural communities, or help fund the studies of the next generation of pastors. Financial support can really help grow churches around the world. You can help make this happen. You can give a gift individually, or take up the offering in your church. You may have already received resources to help with your offering. If you would like more of these resources, please contact us at [info@gmp.org.au](mailto:info@gmp.org.au) so we can assist you.

### Pray for our Partners

Pray as you do this study, but also consider ongoing prayer. Our partners appreciate your prayers so much! Commit to pray for a period that works for you. While the context may be different, we experience the same God, and the same call to be a blessing. Prayer is a great way to act together across nations.

### Consider a Long-Term Church Partnership

We love to see churches connected across nations — and GMP can help facilitate that for your church. Your church can begin a long-term partnership with a church overseas. Support each other through prayer, encouragement, resources and even visits! If you're interested in partnering with a church overseas, please contact us at [info@gmp.org.au](mailto:info@gmp.org.au) or freecall 1800 476 222.

## Further Resources

### Video Resources

To help you promote Walk for Hope, we have also created some videos for you to use in your services. These can be played in person or inserted into your online worship services. Video resources are available for download at [www.walkforhope.com.au](http://www.walkforhope.com.au)

### Contact us



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## Learn More

Find out about our Church Partnerships and Projects in Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, South Sudan, Thailand, Vanuatu, Vietnam and Zimbabwe at [www.gmp.org.au/icp](http://www.gmp.org.au/icp)

## Day 1

# Scripture

**John 17:20-23**

*“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*

As Jesus prays in Gethsemane, his prayers move away from the immediate to the future. *I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message...* This is a remarkable shift. Mere hours before his impending crucifixion, with all the spiritual, mental and physical trauma that means, Jesus stops to pray for us. He knows that what awaits him – his betrayal, trial, crucifixion and resurrection – leads to a powerful story that will shine through the immediate darkness of Jesus’ last night through to us today. The unity that comes from that story will speak out to others and show them the love of God for them. As we embark on this 30-day devotional, this theme of being a blessing to bless others rings out.

**Here, as Jesus prays, we are reminded that we are loved to show others that they too are loved.**

## Day 2

# Action

Do you know your ‘love language’? Gary Chapman identifies five different ways of expressing love to the people around us: acts of service (for example, making a cuppa, cooking a meal, working in the garden, doing the groceries); giving gifts (presents, things that made you think of the person); physical touch (a high five, a touch on the arm, a hug); quality time (doing an activity together, chatting about life); and words of affirmation (a verbal encouragement, a written note).

Grab five Post-It notes or small pieces of paper and write one of the five love languages above on each piece. Take some time to arrange them in order from the one you find most comfortable or easy, to the least.

On each piece, write at least one way that you can show love that falls under that language.

**What are the ways you’re best at showing people you love them? Who are the people in your life and in your neighbourhood who need that kind of love?**

## Day 3

# Reflection

Unity is a major concern for Jesus and the writers of the New Testament. Being one Church, one Body of Christ, is a priority. A unified body has places for everyone to belong, for everyone to be a part of the life of the community. And it also means that we have the greatest chance of meeting the needs of a hurting world through the variety of skills, abilities, perspectives, backgrounds, and gifts of the community. By loving one another well we learn to and are equipped to love the whole of God’s creation.

**Right now, in this current season, what do you see as your role in the Body of Christ? What does your uniqueness bring to the unity of the Body?**



## Day 4

# Scripture

### John 18:2-6

*Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.*

*Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"*

*"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.*

*"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.*

The betrayal of Judas is a well-known story. One of Jesus' closest followers, the path towards the cross proves too much for Judas and, leading a detachment of soldiers into Jesus' presence, the betrayal is complete. What is overlooked here is Jesus' acceptance of his fate. It is he who asks who the soldiers want, and then declares simply and powerfully, I am he. In the face of Jesus' statement of who he is, they drew back and fell to the ground. In the face of hate, of deception, of corruption, it is Jesus' simple acknowledgement that he is who he is brings people to their knees.

**How can we reflect the love of Jesus in such a way that helps others see him?**

## Day 5

# Action

Who are the Christ-following people who you consider inspirational, or that you want to be like? Grab some whiteboard markers (important: check that they are not permanent markers!) and a window or mirror that you see every day. Spend some time thinking about the character traits of the people you thought of and writing them on the glass.

**You may be the best glimpse of Jesus that someone ever sees. What Jesus-traits would you like people to see in you?**

## Day 6

# Reflection

Being called a 'Judas' is an insult that is well understood whether people have read the Bible or not. Think about what it must have been like for Judas to follow Jesus for three years. He would have shared meals with him, slept alongside him, shared laughter and tears with him. Judas was a trusted part of the Twelve and had a role in looking after the group's finances. What do you think it was – and it may have been a series of events – that made Judas turn his back on those positive experiences and betray Jesus?

**What could have stopped this?**

**Is there anything in this reflection that is relevant to your walk with Jesus?**



## Day 7

# Scripture

### John 18:25-27

*Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?"*

*He denied it, saying, "I am not."*

*One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.*

Judas betrays, Peter denies. It is easy to judge them both, but not helpful. For a moment, let us try to imagine what it is like for Peter. He has just seen Jesus, whom he loves, has followed for the past three years, and has so much hope in, arrested and led away by soldiers from the most powerful Empire the world had known. He knows what is in store for Jesus and is therefore reluctant to share Jesus' fate at the hands of Roman executioners. Can you blame him? Imagine the stress of the situation. Both Peter and Judas both make terrible decisions under pressure.

**Who do you know that is experiencing stress – how can your walk with Jesus help them?**

## Day 8

# Action

Grab some pens and paper and, if you like, some modelling clay or playdough. You're going to create a map of your neighbourhood, as it exists in your mind. Start by drawing your home in the centre of the page. Next, draw some key landmarks on the map roughly where they are in relation to your home – these might include your church building, local schools where you or your family attend, parks, shopping centres, places where you spend time, places where you have fond memories, or anything that you think of when you think about your neighbourhood.

Grab your modelling clay or a pen and start to add people to the map. As you form the people in your hands and place them, think about the people in your neighbourhood. Pray for them.

**Where are the places of stress and hardship in your neighbourhood? What does God's compassion and blessing look like for those places?**

## Day 9

# Reflection

"How do you cope with stress?"

That's a common question. Perhaps a better, and a more preventive question, is "what causes you stress?" When we ask that question, we can identify potentially stressful situations before they occur, and possibly put some things in place that prevent us making bad decisions or acting out while we are under stress.

A common response to stress is to shut down – and shutting down denies those around us the gift of us at our best. It is harder (not impossible!) to be a blessing when we can't operate close to what God intended.

**So, what are the situations in life that cause you stress – and how can you aim to limit that stress?**



## Day 10

# Scripture

### John 19:13-16

*When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon.*

*"Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.*

*But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"*

*"Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked.*

*"We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.*

*Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.*

Pilate is using Jesus for political purposes. He knows that Jesus has angered the Jewish religious leaders, and so uses this moment to do what they want – but at a price. When they reply to him that we have no king but Caesar, they are rejecting Jesus and embracing the Roman Empire. In our current context, politics is very divisive. To say that Jesus supports our political views is always a risky approach. Jesus' 'politics' - as far as we can tell – are primarily about loving God, loving people, loving self and loving our enemies.

**Have you ever used Jesus and/or his teachings to win an argument? How did that make you feel?**

## Day 11

# Action

Go for a walk through your neighbourhood, ideally through a variety of streets, possibly a park, maybe even a shopping centre. As you walk, ask yourself what you notice about your neighbourhood. What stands out to you? What is unique about your neighbourhood? What makes this place this place? Who are the people who live here, and what do they want in life? What things are good about your neighbourhood – the things that you love about living here, and the unique goodness of the people?

**In what ways is your neighbourhood blessed by God?**

## Day 12

# Reflection

If you were a politician, either at a local, State or Federal level, what would you institute as a law that would make your neighbourhoods better? What would you build on that is already a blessing in your neighbourhood?

**Write it down.**

**Then, reflect on how you can make that happen as you seek to bless the people around you.**



## Day 13

# Scripture

### John 19:17-19

*Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.*

*Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: jesus of nazareth, the king of the jews.*

All the Gospel writers are brief when it comes to describing the crucifixion. They do not go into the details of what the victims of a crucifixion experienced and instead focus on the fact that it happened, and that both Jesus' manner of execution and his death itself were public.

**Let's take a bit more time today to reflect on this...**

- **In the NIV English translation, John takes four words to describe the crucifixion: there they crucified him. It is a simple account, and the Gospel writers all let the horror and injustice of the death of Jesus – a man who did nothing to deserve death – speak for itself. Crucifixion was a shameful death, which the Romans used to humiliate their victims and to terrorise witnesses.**
- **Why do you think John – who was an eyewitness – leaves out the gory details of the cross? There is often a temptation (see The Passion) for filmmakers to make the act of crucifying Jesus as graphic as possible.**
- **If you were asked to talk about the cross, during a communion talk for example, how would you describe what happened. If you were in John's position, what would you have focused on?**

- **Given that there are so few details about the actual act of the crucifixion, and that there are far more words devoted to what happens around the crucifixion, perhaps John is making the point that as important as the crucifixion is, there are many ways in which people respond to it. What is your response to there they crucified him?**

## Day 14

# Action

Grab some art supplies, some paper and pens, or a digital art app. Spend some time creating an artwork based on the crucifixion—but intentionally avoid the common images of the crucifixion; e.g. the cross itself, nails, blood, the crown of thorns, etc. The quality of your work doesn't matter, and you don't need to show it to anyone. If you prefer to write words, or compose music, or use any other creative medium to explore the crucifixion, go for it.

**How do you, like John, express the meaning and importance of the crucifixion without showing the act? What do you choose to focus on?**

## Day 15

# Reflection

You've read about the crucifixion and you've expressed the crucifixion in a creative way.

This is a simple reflection on a complex event.

**How do you best live out the themes of the crucifixion?**



## Day 16

# Scripture

### John 19:28-30

*Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

Although it seems a passive position that Jesus is in on the cross, these few verses speak of a Jesus who is in control. He is aware that the cross is not simply an act of evil against an innocent man, but that it is part of his purpose to be on earth. The three words that he speaks just before he dies are not words of resignation, but words of fulfilment: It is finished. It is no accident that he has died on a cross. It is so that Scripture would be fulfilled, and that the reconciliation of God and the humanity that carries his divine image would be completed.

**If God can take something as horrible as the cross, and use it for his purposes, how do you think he can use people like us – fearfully and wonderfully made – as a blessing to the world we live in?**

## Day 17

# Action

What are your great strengths? Grab some paper and pens. Divide your page into three columns. Label the first column "Skills". Label the second column "Passions". Label the third column "Resources".

Spend some time thinking about yourself and your life. What are your skills; the things you're good at through hard work or talent, through training or practice, the things that make people say, "Wow, I didn't know you could do that!" What are your passions; the things that occupy your thoughts, the things you are knowledgeable about, the things that you care deeply about? What are your resources; the wealth and objects you control, the connections you have in the community, the things you can make use of when needed?

Write as many as you can think of in each column, or write each response on a Post-It note.

**What blessings has God put into your life in this season? How can you use these blessings to bless the people around you?**

## Day 18

# Reflection

The cross. It dominates the Gospels in terms of the fact that Jesus is walking towards his fate willingly and with purpose.

Take a moment to consider your purpose. There can be two aspects to this, and yesterday's Action focused on the external expression of your purpose.

**What of that other part of ourselves, the inner life, that we also need to cultivate to express our purpose in the world? How do you fuel and maintain your interior life? What spiritual practices can you embrace that help you to reflect on Jesus' purpose for you to love God, love self, love your neighbour and love your enemies?**



## Day 19

# Scripture

### John 19:40-42

*Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.*

This action of Joseph of Arimathea's is brave. In difficult contexts – in which many of GMP's partners operate – it takes bravery to be a blessing. He has followed Jesus "secretly" but now comes before Pilate, the most powerful man in Palestine, and asks for the body of Jesus. He is accompanied by a Pharisee, Nicodemus, who brings herbs (including myrrh) to wrap Jesus' body in. They lay Jesus in the empty tomb, knowing that this act of blessing the body of Christ will cause them to be at odds with the Empire and institutions that surround them.

This is what GMP's partners do, particularly in places like Indonesia, Bangladesh, India, Vietnam and Zimbabwe where, sometimes, being a blessing brings them at odds with the culture around them.

**How can you act to be a blessing to the body of Christ (the church) despite what the dominant culture may say about you doing it?**

## Day 20

# Action

God's vision for the life of faith is never individual followers by themselves, but always as part of a community of faith—a church. What are the great strengths of your church community?

Call a friend in your community, or meet up for a cuppa, and ask them about their skills, passions, and resources. Be curious, and ask them questions. Ask them about the ways they are putting, or might put, their strengths into action in the neighbourhood.

**Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea each brought something to their task, and together had the courage to take action to achieve something they cared about. What blessings do you and your friend(s) bring to your neighbourhood?**

## Day 21

# Reflection

What do you think of when you think of bravery?

If you've grown up watching blockbuster Hollywood movies, for example, bravery is often expressed as the 'against all odds' action to make things right or to win the just fight, or the 'take one for the team' approach that sees a person sacrifice themselves for the greater good.

How do you think bravery plays out in real life? In the ordinary but still crucial ebb and flow of our day-to-day existence? Bravery in ordinary life can often be seen as living in a way that also inspires others to be brave – think of those who advocate for equality and acceptance for their marginalised communities.

**How can you be brave in real life? What would that look like?**

**Is bravery a blessing to others?**



## Day 22

# Scripture

### John 20:1-2

*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"*

One suspects that Mary Magdalene thought that she was doing a task that was thankless and lonely. In the darkness, she makes her way to Jesus' tomb – alone, mourning, desperate to still be connected to the Jesus that she followed and who had transformed her life. The dream that she and his other followers had of a radical new life seemed dead. As she arrives, there is a gaping hole where the stone should have been. Her fear is robbery, deceit but – unknown to her – what has occurred is the resurrection. She runs, breathless, to Peter and John, and shares her fears – which will soon be transformed into the blessing of telling others that Christ has risen, he has risen indeed.

**When has your fear turned to joy, to hope?**

**How can you be the sort of person who helps others have hope on their dark mornings of loneliness and fear?**

## Day 23

# Action

Where is God at work in your neighbourhood? Grab a local newspaper, or head to a local news website, and spend some time reading the stories, looking intentionally for signs of God at work. Keep an eye out for God's Kingdom of beauty, joy, love, and compassion breaking through. When you find a story, or a paragraph, cut it out and collate it with others.

**Sometimes it's hard to see God at work, and we think Jesus has disappeared from our lives and the life of the neighbourhood. Who are the people you turn to help you find Jesus alive, well, and at work?**

## Day 24

# Reflection

Darkness is a part of our human experience, whether we are people of faith or not. Mary Magdalene had face-to-face contact with Jesus and would have experienced and seen miracles first hand. She would have heard the voice of Jesus speaking about death, resurrection and hope. Yet the darkness of that lonely Sunday morning is overwhelming, and her fears are powerful. That is something that we can all identify with – we know a truth, a truth that is light, but when the darkness rolls in it feels all consuming.

**What has been your darkest morning – when you awoke with no hope?**

**How did you cope?**

**Has there been any way that you have been able to bless others with your experience?**



## Day 25

# Scripture

### John 20:11-16

*Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.*

*They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"*

*"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.*

*He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."*

*Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").*

John and Peter retreat from the inside of the tomb. Mary is alone, again, this time in the light. She sees two figures, who ask her what is wrong – but Mary is still convinced that Jesus' body is stolen. She turns around, and in her grief, mistakes Jesus for a gardener, until he utters one simple word: Mary.

We forget, at times, the power in a name.

We forget what it means to be called by someone who we never thought we'd hear from again.

Their voice, their knowledge of our shared experiences, can be powerful. Once she hears her name, Mary lights up and recognises her Lord.

**Who can you reach out to – so long as it is safe to do so – who needs to hear your voice? Whose name can you say that will be a blessing for them?**

## Day 26

# Action

Find somewhere in your home (perhaps in your garden) that is out of the way and protected from heavy weather and traffic. Gather a collection of stones and place them nearby (garden shops will sell polished river stones, if needed). At the end of the day – and any day you think of it – take a moment to think about your day and where you have encountered Jesus. Was there a comforting thought that rose to mind that may have come from the Holy Spirit? Did you see Jesus in the smile of a friend? Did your feelings rise in righteous indignation when you observed injustice? If you feel that you encountered Jesus today, add a stone to a pile. Each day you encounter Jesus at work in your life, or in the lives of those around you, add a stone to the pile.

**Where are the places, and who are the people, that make it easiest for you to recognise the presence of Jesus in your life?**

## Day 27

# Reflection

Grief has often been described as not happening in a straight line. People who experience grief will often describe it coming in waves, and often unexpectedly. Some will speak of anniversaries of the loss of a loved one as sometimes relatively easy to cope with, yet a smell, a word, a piece of music can bring on a deep sense of loss. Those experiences of deep loss can often overwhelm us, and it seems that this was what was happening to Mary at the tomb.

**What has been your experience of grief?**

**How have you coped with it?**

**Is there someone you can walk with to make your grief more bearable or whom you can help carry their burden of grief when it washes over them?**



## Day 28

# Scripture

### John 20:24-29

*Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"*

*But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."*

*A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."*

*Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"*

*Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

Thomas has yet to see the risen Jesus. He is often called 'doubting' Thomas, which is possibly unfair. From his point of view, he is being called to hope beyond his wildest hope, to imagine beyond what human experience has taught him over the years: that someone who was dear to him and gone, could come back. That words that were unsaid could be said. Jesus' first words as he enters are, "Peace be with you!" There is no condemnation for fear, or doubt, just a reminder that his presence is enough for us to experience a wholeness and completeness we can only imagine.

**Who can you bring peace to?**

**How can you encourage people to recognise that there is hope even amidst fear?**

## Day 29

# Action

Tear up some paper into pieces large enough to write on. Grab a pen and spend some time writing every question you can think of that you have about, or for, God, about faith and about life. Shuffle them up and put them in an opaque jar and container. Draw one out of the container and set yourself the goal of finding an answer to, or a reflection on, this question in the next week. Afterwards, whenever you feel like it, draw another question out and attempt to find a response within a similar timeframe. As you discover new questions, write them down and add them to the jar.

**God always has time for our questions, even when it feels like our peers aren't asking those same questions. God takes the time to show us what we need to be able to understand. When you have questions, where and with who do you search for answers?**

## Day 30

# Reflection

How do you treat doubt? Is it something you are ashamed of, or do you think it is just a natural part of life, part of the fact that we humans simply don't have access to all the information that we need at all times?

As you've walked through this resource, how do you think being blessed to bless others works regarding doubt? In the three years that the followers of Jesus walked with him through Palestine, there must have been times where his words and actions caused them to doubt the view they had of him as Messiah. They didn't allow that doubt to stop their following – in fact, it formed a lot of their questions of Jesus. We are all seeking clarity about life.

**What is it you can live without having greater clarity on?**

**What is it you need to have greater clarity on?**





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