



**GLOBAL
CHRISTIAN
RELIEF**

EASTER DEVOTIONALS

Easter Devotional: **Mary Magdalene and Suzanne** (John 20:11-18)

When Mary Magdalene first encounters the risen Christ, she is unable to see what is right in front of her. As she stands outside of His tomb and weeps, her grief completely consuming her, she faces two angels but seemingly does not recognize who they are. She turns to see Jesus, but she does not recognize Him, either.

In that moment, she hears her Savior calling out her name—"Mary!" Suddenly, her eyes are opened and her grief gives way to joy. "Rabboni!" she cries out in shock. Jesus instructs her to tell His other

followers that she has seen Him resurrected and she gleefully shares the good news.

Even though Mary Magdalene saw Jesus and the angels at the tomb, at first, her heart did not grasp what she was witnessing. In Ephesians 1:18, Paul writes, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you." The eyes of Mary's heart were opened as Jesus called to her and she recognized Him.

Suzanne's Story



Suzanne is a Nigerian believer who was persecuted for her faith by Boko Haram. Even though Suzanne lost her physical eyesight, she has kept the eyes of her heart on the Lord and has forgiven her persecutors.

One day, Suzanne was tending crops with her father when members of the radical Islamic group seized them. She cried out in horror, watching as the terrorists shot and murdered her father. One man held a gun to her head, demanding she come

with them. Suzanne refused, knowing that the terrorists would force her to convert to Islam. The man fired his gun into the side of her head. Suzanne fell unconscious and the terrorists left her for dead.

Suzanne was found alive and taken to a hospital. By God's grace, she survived and rejoined her husband and children, but the bullet damaged her eyes, leaving her blind. Yet, the eyes of Suzanne's heart remain open, fully cognizant of the hope to which Jesus has called her. When asked if she could forgive those who shot her and killed her father, she smiled and said, "In ignorance he committed his actions. Oh God, forgive them."



RESPOND IN PRAYER

Do you feel seen and known by God? Do you want the eyes of your heart awakened to see God's love? Pray that God will open the eyes of your heart to see and know Him. He has called us all to hope—even in light of persecution—that we can only have in Him.

"Jesus, You are the God who sees me and knows me by name. Thank You for Suzanne's example of faith and courage despite what had been done to her. Continue to open the eyes of my heart that I may know You more and grow stronger in faith. Bless Suzanne and allow her to live in peace, her eyes fixed on You. Strengthen Your persecuted church and open their eyes to the hope found in You. In Your name, I pray. Amen."

Easter Devotional: Disciples on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32)

In John 16:33, Jesus warns His followers that we will suffer for our faith—but that is not the end of the story. “In this world you will have trouble,” He says. “But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Shortly after His resurrection, Jesus encounters two disciples walking from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. The two are discussing Jesus and His death, but in their sorrow and confusion, they are unable to see Him right in front of them. As we read in Luke 24:15-16, “Jesus himself came up and walked along with them, but they were kept from recognizing Him.”

“We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel,” they say, assuming that Jesus’ death means that He cannot be their Savior.

But Jesus argues with them that His suffering is required for their salvation. “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to come into His glory?” He asks. He begins teaching them about Himself and what Scripture reveals about His death and persecution. This terrible suffering, even death on a cross, was necessary for Christ to take away the sins of the world.

Persecution comes not just for Jesus, but often, for His followers as well. As 1 Peter 4:12-13 says, “Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed.”

Bima and Suman’s Story



One family of Christians living in Nagpur, India, is no stranger to persecution. Bima and his sisters Suman and Bindu were raised in a Hindu family and predominantly Hindu village. But when Bima fell seriously ill, Bindu suggested taking him to a church and asking for prayer for healing. Because Hindu nationalism is rising in India, the siblings knew they were risking persecution. Still, they took a step of faith into the church.

The believers there prayed for Bima, and soon, he was miraculously healed. All three siblings came to faith in Christ and Bindu began to passionately share the Gospel with everyone around them. “She was never afraid of the village people; she always came in front and talked to people,” Bima

said of his sister. “When she shared the Word of God with others, so many people came to Christ through her life.”

Tragically, Bindu was killed by their Hindu relatives, who attacked all three siblings, sending a strong message that their Christian faith was not welcome in the village. Despite Bindu’s death, Suman and Bima have remained unshaken in their faith in God.

“My life has changed. I wouldn’t think of turning back,” Suman proclaimed. Bima added, “If I live, I live for God. If I die, I die for God.” Both take Peter’s words to heart and are not afraid to suffer for Jesus.



RESPOND IN PRAYER

Do you find it hard to accept the suffering that comes from following God? Many disciples around the world face deadly persecution, while others experience discrimination or other difficulties as a result of following Christ. Whatever our experience, we can ask God to give us grace to follow Him no matter what as we pray for our own persecuted siblings—and take heart that He has overcome the world.



“Jesus, thank You for suffering on the cross for the sake of my sin. Thank You also for the peace that You have promised despite whatever troubles may come for me. I ask for strength and courage like Bindu, Suman and Bima who suffered courageously in Your name. I pray for continued strength for Bima and Suman as they continue to live boldly in the face of persecution. In Your name, I pray. Amen.”

Easter Devotional: **Hiding Disciples** (John 20:19-23)

Can you imagine the despair and hopelessness the disciples must have felt after Jesus' death? In John 20, we find them gathered together, locked in a room out of fear of persecution. Their teacher has just been crucified, and peace is likely the last thing on their minds.

But Jesus appears to them, declaring, "Peace be with you!" He shows them His hands and His scars, proof of His death and resurrection. His followers are filled with joy at the sight of Him.

Jesus does not want them to remain locked away,

cowering in fear. Instead, He calls them to share the good news of His resurrection. "Peace be with you!" He repeats. "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Then He breathes onto them, blessing them with the Holy Spirit.

"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you," says 1 Peter 5:7. God knows that living the life to which He has called us can be a scary thing, whether we are called to live as Christians in a country rife with persecution or simply share His Gospel in a skeptical and cynical culture. Still, He calls us to cast our fear on Him, not to dwell in our anxiety.

Mamta's Story



Mamta is a 71-year-old Christian living in Madhya Pradesh, India. Mamta has been imprisoned for her faith—but still, she chooses courage over fear.

Due to the influence of Hindu nationalism, many Indian states have imposed strict anti-conversion laws. Religious liberty is in a dire state, leaving Christians subject to discrimination and persecution.

Mamta was hosting a prayer meeting in her home when police stormed in and arrested her. "I was very scared at that time," she said. "But when they entered inside, I suddenly felt that my fear was gone." God granted her with a miraculous peace, even as she was arrested and thrown in jail.

"I am blessed that God used me to go to jail and share His testimony," Mamta said. "God gave me a chance to spread the word." She spent seven days in jail, where she told her fellow prisoners all about Jesus. God used what was meant to cause pain and distress into a time of joyful fellowship.



RESPOND IN PRAYER

Do you struggle with feeling at peace in a world where despair can seem like the most logical choice? Learning how to cast our anxieties on God takes practice. Pray that He will give you the strength to trust in His plan and let peace, not fear, fill your heart.

"Father, thank You for caring for my soul. Thank You for the peace that comes from faith in You. Help me to be strong in my faith like Your servant Mamta, who rejoiced that she had the opportunity to spread Your word despite the persecution that resulted. I pray that Mamta would continue to experience Your joy and Your peace which surpass understanding. Help her to lead more people to faith in You and help me to follow her example. In Your name, I pray. Amen."

Easter Devotional:

Doubting Thomas

(John 20:24-29)

When Jesus appears before His disciples following His resurrection, one of them, a man named Thomas, is not with them. The others share the news of the living Christ with him, but he is skeptical. "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," he says.

To Thomas's surprise, Jesus returns, appearing in a locked room before him. "Peace be with you!" Jesus says. "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." As Thomas recognizes Jesus for who He is, Jesus says, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Peter also speaks to the blessing that comes from following Jesus despite not being able to see Him. As 1 Peter 1:8-9 says, "Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

Although those who believe without seeing are called blessed, Jesus has appeared before some whom He called to follow Him but who resist, such as Thomas. Even today, Jesus comes in dreams and visions to people we might not expect.

Azad's Story



Azad was a Muslim extremist in Iran who always carried the Quran with him. In 1996, he watched a short film based on Luke's Gospel. Hoping to disprove its claims, he started to read a copy of Luke. That night, he had a vivid and shocking dream. He felt his shoulder and arm become wet with what he realized was the blood of Christ.

Throughout the next decade, Azad remembered and contemplated his strange dream. While working as a hotel manager in Syria, he met a Christian who introduced him to a pastor. Azad shared his story and what Jesus revealed to him. "You're already a believer!" the pastor declared.

Even though it took ten years for his faith to grow, Azad had been walking in Christ-like faith without truly realizing it. Jesus did not abandon him even in his doubt. Azad and his family would eventually be kicked out of their neighborhood due to death threats from Islamic leaders. They now live in Iraq, but Azad serves the persecuted church in Iran by smuggling Bibles over the border at night. Despite the grave risk he endures, Azad remains steadfast. "All people need God's word," he declared.



RESPOND IN PRAYER

We are called to walk by faith and not by sight. God gave Azad a powerful dream, but it was still up to Azad to live out his faith, and now, he courageously and selflessly spreads the Gospel. Pray that God will grow your faith as you follow His plan for your life.



"Dear Lord, thank you for this gift of faith that You have given me. Strengthen my hope in You and in Your promises, even when I cannot see You and You seem far away. Thank you for the lessons we can learn from believers like Thomas and Azad, who believed in You after You appeared before them. Please bless Azad as he carries out his dangerous calling and give me the courage and opportunity to share Your Word with those around me. In Your name, I pray. Amen."

Easter Devotional:

Disciples Receiving the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20)

In Matthew 28, we find Jesus before He ascends into heaven following His death, resurrection and the time spent with His followers. He gathers His disciples on a mountain to give His final exhortation. Matthew notes, "They worshipped Him; but some doubted." Even with Christ before them, some of his disciples do not fully trust in Him. Nevertheless, their doubt does not stop them from worshipping.

Jesus sees their doubt, but He does not rebuke them. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," He says. "Therefore go and

make disciples of all nations." Jesus has chosen these men to be His apostles knowing that they still struggle to trust fully in Him. Their doubt is not disqualifying. Jesus still calls them to worship Him and spread His Gospel.

When Christians face persecution or hardship, it becomes easy to doubt God's providence. Nevertheless, even in our darkest hours, Jesus' promise is the same: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Even when we do not see Him, He is there.

Arjun's Story



Arjun was raised in a Hindu community in rural Nepal. As one of the first people to become a Christian in his village, he was met with skepticism and disdain from his family and friends.

"My brothers and other members of my tribe excluded me and told me I was no longer allowed to eat with them," Arjun said. Even his own mother disowned him.

However, Arjun continued to worship and follow God. Despite the persecution, he became an evangelist and soon would see the fruit of his labors. Seventy-one members of his extended family have become believers. "In my village, there was not one single believer, let alone a single fellowship," Arjun said.

"Now, there are six fellowships there." It would have been easy for Arjun to give into despair, but he chose to worship and preach, and countless others have been brought to faith in Christ thanks to his courage.



RESPOND IN PRAYER

Do you find it difficult to trust in God's plan? In a world where evil seems to succeed and persecutors prey on vulnerable Christians, it is very easy to doubt. Jesus sees our doubt and He does not dismiss us. Even in our moments of doubt, He calls us to love and worship Him. Pray for a heart inclined toward worship even in tribulation.

"Dear Jesus, I thank You that You see my doubts and anxieties, and still You call me Yours. I thank You for the courage of believers like Arjun, who did not let persecution stop him from sharing Your Gospel. I pray that You continue to empower Arjun to live out Your great commission. Give me the opportunity to make disciples in Your name and remind me that, even in my doubt, You are always with Me. Thank You, Lord. In Your name, I pray. Amen."