RIVER
Flow

Seven Days of Devotional Practice
November 15 – 21, 2026

Sent with Scars

John 20:19–23; 2 Corinthians 1:3–4

A Note Before You Sit

This is the last week of From Wounds to Witness. It stays with the disciples on the evening of the resurrection, and with Paul, who learned comfort in an affliction that nearly ended him. The question the week keeps asking: what would it mean to carry the comfort you have received before your healing is finished?

Go slowly. Healing does not move in a straight line, and no one should read this week as the place they ought to be by now. If the week stirs something heavy, please reach out to me or to someone you trust, or call or text 988.

Ways to use this guide, from the most shared to the most personal:

1. As a group: watch this Sabbath's sermon together (website and YouTube), then walk the week and discuss the questions at the back. No one need share more than they choose.

2. As a group that meets once a week: each person walks the days alone, and you gather one day, in person or on Zoom, to pray that day together.

3. One-on-one: read it with someone you are discipling, taking a day, or the closing questions, as your conversation.

4. On your own, or with your family, a day at a time.

— Pastor Mel Baga, D.Min.
Lead Pastor, Auburn SDA Church

Daily Devotional Guide

SUNDAY, November 15 — The First One Sent

"I have seen the Lord" — John 20:18

Read: John 20:15–18

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' " Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Reflect: Before the locked room there was a garden. Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark and stayed after the others went home. She is weeping when Jesus speaks to her, and she does not know him until he says her name.

Then he gives her a task. Do not hold on to me, he says; go to my brothers. Her grief is hours old, and she becomes the first person in John's Gospel sent to say that Jesus is alive. The disciples hear her that evening and stay behind their doors. What she says is true because of whom she has seen, not because she has stopped crying. The first witness to the resurrection had been weeping all morning.

Notice: Notice where your name has been spoken this week with love, and how it lands in you.

Pray: Risen Lord, you found Mary in her weeping and called her by name. Call me by mine, and send me when you choose, even if my eyes are still wet. Amen.

Stay: Find a quiet place and sit before God for twenty minutes, as you are able. Settle into a comfortable posture, kneeling or seated, and begin your silent, wordless prayer. When a thought, feeling, or sensation arises, notice it, let it go, and return to the here and now. A short word chosen beforehand (*God*, *love*,

here, *return*) or the breath at the tip of your nose can bring you back; once you have returned, let it go too. You are not emptying your mind, only resting it. In that stillness the Spirit does the transforming work he longs to do in you.

MONDAY, November 16 — Speak to Her Heart

"Comfort, O comfort my people" — Isaiah 40:1

Read: Isaiah 40:1–2

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

Reflect: Isaiah 40 is spoken to people who had lost their city, their temple and their king. The first word God gives them is comfort, said twice. When Paul calls God "the God of all consolation," he uses the same word the Greek translation of the Old Testament uses here. The comfort Paul received was Isaiah's comfort, the comfort of a God who comes back to a broken people.

"Speak tenderly" is, in Hebrew, speak to the heart. The phrase belongs to courtship. It describes Boaz's kindness to Ruth, and Hosea uses it when God woos Israel in the wilderness. God's comfort comes as speech addressed to the place where we hurt, in a tone meant to win us back.

Notice: Notice the tone of the voice in your head when you think about what happened to you, and whether it is the tone God uses here.

Pray: God of all comfort, speak to my heart and not only to my mind. Say to me what you said to your people when they came home. Amen.

Stay: As on Sunday.

TUESDAY, November 17 — Breath for the Slain

"Come from the four winds, O breath" — Ezekiel 37:9

Read: Ezekiel 37:7–10

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Reflect: Ezekiel's valley is a battlefield. The bones belong to the slain, people who died by violence and were never buried. God puts them back together in two stages. First bone comes to bone, and sinew, flesh and skin cover them. The bodies look whole. Then Ezekiel sees what is missing: there was no breath in them.

Some healing looks finished from the outside long before breath returns. A person can keep appointments and carry on and still not breathe freely. In Hebrew one word means breath, wind and spirit, and Ezekiel uses all three. On the evening of the resurrection Jesus breathed on his frightened disciples, and the Greek translation of Ezekiel uses the same verb for the breath that comes into the slain. Breath is the gift that makes the rest live.

Notice: Notice, without changing anything, where your breath is easy today and where it catches. If attending to your breath is hard for you, notice the air in the room instead.

Pray: Spirit of God, breathe on what has been put back together in me but does not yet live. Amen.

Stay: As on Sunday.

WEDNESDAY, November 18 — The Sentence of Death

"So that we would rely not on ourselves but on God" — 2 Corinthians 1:9

Read: 2 Corinthians 1:8–9

We do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia, for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

Reflect: Paul blesses the God of all consolation and then tells the Corinthians what the consolation cost. In Asia he was crushed beyond his strength, so far that he despaired of life itself. He felt he had received the sentence of death. We do not know what happened. Paul does not explain it, and he does not pretend he handled it well.

The man who gave God that name learned it at the bottom. He says the affliction taught him to rely on the God who raises the dead, and he says it without claiming that God sent the affliction to teach him. If Paul's words about despairing of life sound like your own thoughts, please tell someone today. The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline answers by call or text at any hour.

Notice: Notice whether you have hidden how close to the edge you have been, and from whom.

Pray: God who raises the dead, I bring you the places where I despaired. Be my comfort there, and give me one person to tell. Amen.

Stay: As on Sunday.

THURSDAY, November 19 — Treasure in Clay Jars

"We have this treasure in clay jars" — 2 Corinthians 4:7

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:7–10

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed, always carrying around in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.

Reflect: In Paul's world clay jars were the cheapest vessels in the house. They held water, grain and oil, and they cracked. Paul says the gospel is carried in vessels like that, so that it will be clear the power belongs to God.

Then he lists what has happened to the jar: afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down. Each time he names what did not follow: not crushed, not driven to despair, not forsaken, not destroyed. He carries in his body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible there too. At the end of Galatians he writes that he carries the marks of Jesus on his body. Paul does not hide the places where the clay is thin.

Notice: Notice a weak place in your life that someone has seen and not turned away from.

Pray: Lord Jesus, I am clay. Let your life be seen in me, even where I am thin. Amen.

Stay: As on Sunday.

FRIDAY, November 20 — A Piece of Broiled Fish

"Touch me and see" — Luke 24:39

Read: Luke 24:36–43

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Reflect: Luke tells the same evening John tells, with different details. The disciples think they are seeing a ghost. Jesus shows them his hands and his feet and invites them to touch him. Then, while they are still caught between joy and disbelief, he asks if they have anything to eat.

The risen body bears the marks of the cross and gets hungry. Luke says they disbelieved for joy, which is an honest description of good news heard by people who have been hurt: too good to trust yet. Jesus does not argue them out of it. He eats fish in front of them. Healing often returns the same way, through ordinary things done in the company of others, a meal, a walk, a shared silence, until the body believes what the mind has heard.

Notice: Notice one ordinary thing today that feels safe, a meal or a conversation, and stay with it a moment longer than usual.

Pray: Risen Lord, you ate with frightened friends. Meet me in ordinary things until my body believes what my mind has heard. Amen.

Stay: As on Sunday.

SABBATH, November 21 — The Mantle

"Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him" — 1 Kings 19:19

Read: 1 Kings 19:19–21

So he set out from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat, who was plowing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." Then Elijah said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" He returned from following him, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them; using the equipment from the oxen, he boiled their flesh and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out and followed Elijah and became his servant.

Reflect: Five weeks ago this series began with Elijah under a broom tree asking to die, and in a cave saying, I alone am left. God's answer included a name. Elisha son of Shaphat would stand where Elijah stood. Elijah leaves the mountain and finds him plowing behind twelve yoke of oxen, and he throws his mantle over him.

The prophet who believed he was the only one left goes on with a companion. Elisha burns his plow, feeds the people, and follows. The cloak that covered Elijah's face at the mouth of the cave now rests on another man's shoulders. Sabbath gathers the wounded and the sent into one room. Here what we have been given passes from one set of shoulders to another.

Notice: Notice who has carried something for you, and who might be ready for you to carry something for them.

Pray: Lord, you did not leave Elijah alone, and you have not left us alone. Gather us today, and send us out together. Amen.

Stay: As on Sunday.

Group Discussion Questions

1. Mary was sent while she was still weeping. What has it been like to be needed before you felt ready?

2. Isaiah's comfort is speech "to the heart." Who has spoken to you that way, and what did it do in you?

3. Ezekiel saw bodies that looked whole before they had breath. Where might your healing look finished from the outside without yet feeling alive?

4. Paul admitted that he despaired of life. How could our church become a place where people can say how hard things have been?

5. Paul carried treasure in a clay jar. How has God's comfort shown through a place in you that is not strong?

6. In Luke, Jesus helped frightened friends believe through an ordinary meal. What ordinary practice helps you trust the good news?

7. Elisha received Elijah's mantle. Without naming anyone, who might need the comfort you have received, and what would a first small step look like?

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