



**ONE***prayer*

*Daily Devotions*





# READY FOR HARVEST

After every pandemic in history, there has been spiritual revival. Are you ready for the harvest? When Jesus saw the crowds, he said that the fields were ready for harvest. The work of planting and nurturing was done. It was time to reap. These devotions explore what Jesus said about the harvest and call us to get involved in the promised harvest of new believers.

The term "harvest" is not a particularly politically correct term in 2023. A secular West does not like to think that Christians are wanting to bring in a harvest. And they're right if by harvesting we mean twisting the arms of people until they submit to Jesus. But for Christians, harvesting is presenting the good news of Jesus, praying for God to do his work of love and grace, and humbly assisting people to respond. We long for our friends and community to experience the mercy, truth and freedom that we have found in Jesus and commit to ensuring that everyone can hear and see the good news about Jesus.

"Harvest" was an obvious term for Jesus to use. A large proportion of the Jewish population was dependent on the land for their living. They knew all about waiting for and then reaping a harvest. It was natural for Jesus to speak of the growth of his kingdom in terms of a harvest. And we continue to believe in and pray for a harvest in our day.

Each devotion is supported by one or two harvest stories from within the QB Movement this year. These stories range from tiny churches to very large churches, from individuals to mass movements, from chaplaincy to schools to training to overseas mission. The stories are very different, but in each story, there is clear evidence that God is doing something very special in our time. God's harvest is being reaped by those who are expectant and willing.





*Day 1*

# A PLENTIFUL HARVEST

## **MATTHEW 9:35-38**

<sup>35</sup> Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. <sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."


## **A PLENTIFUL HARVEST**

Jesus is enjoying a very productive time in his ministry. He is in his home territory of Galilee and the crowds are flocking to see and hear him. In Matthew's eyes, Jesus is showing himself to be the Messiah by the powerful things he is doing. The crowds can't get enough of this miracle-working, authoritative Rabbi. His ministry is all they have dreamed of and been waiting for.

Of course, the people in these crowds have mixed motives. Some are genuinely wondering if Jesus is the Messiah, others are looking for a quick fix for their health issues, and others are just there for the show. But whatever their motives, they are hungry for something. For a long time, there has been no real spiritual leadership in the nation and they have not known what to do or whom to follow. They are like "sheep without a shepherd" (9:36) according to Jesus. They have lost their hope and their connection with God and their leaders have given no direction or help. They are harassed by both their Roman overlords and their own supposed spiritual leaders. And they can do nothing about it; they are helpless like sheep with no shepherd.

As Jesus interacts with the crowds and their never-ending needs, he is moved. The Greek word translated "had compassion" means "to be moved in the inward parts." I was at a funeral of a beautiful Christian lady yesterday. As the adult sons talked about their Mum, they were moved internally, and tears flowed. It's this deep, gut-wrenching concern that Jesus feels as he sees the hopelessness of these people who have been abandoned by their shepherds.





# Day 1

# A PLENTIFUL HARVEST

But the problem is not the desperation of the crowds. According to Jesus, they are a ripe harvest just waiting to be reaped. God can meet the needs of every person in these harassed and helpless crowds. God loves them. God is ready to forgive and free them. God is wanting to provide direction and purpose for them. God is longing to love and lead them. Jesus is certain about the answer to their needs.

The real challenge facing Jesus is the lack of harvest workers (9:37). Who is going to teach the ignorant? Who is going to heal the hurting? Who is going to support the abused? Who is going to guide the lost? Who is going to share the good news with the disillusioned? Who is going to bring in the harvest? As Jesus says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." As a man, Jesus can't do it all. He is personally overwhelmed by the need and the massive opportunities it generates. He is giving his all, but it's not nearly enough to reap the full harvest.

Maybe you're thinking that this was a specific season in Jesus' mission that is not really applicable to the time in which we live. You could argue that the people you know are self-satisfied and self-sufficient and not at all harassed and helpless like these crowds. This is certainly true of some. But there is a huge amount of anxiety and fear and frustration and vulnerability and desperation around. Our political and community leaders don't have the answers, but God does. The harvest is plentiful and we're beginning to see this.

But we face the same dilemma that Jesus faced. We just don't have the workers. Who is going to teach the ignorant? Who is going to heal the hurting? Who is going to support the abused? Who is going to guide the lost? Who is going to share the good news with the disillusioned? Who is going to bring in the harvest? Jesus' answer for us is to pray: "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (9:38). Please make this your prayer for this week.

**READY FOR HARVEST STORY:**

## **BEENLEIGH BAPTIST CHURCH**

Many years ago, a drunk young man named Nick attended Beenleigh Baptists for the first time. Eventually, he came to believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and for the last ten years, Nick has been a school chaplain at Beenleigh schools and manager of the Eagleby Giants Rugby





*Day 1*

# A PLENTIFUL HARVEST

League Club. This year Nick was called to be our Next Gen Pastor. We had been searching for a suitable candidate looking far and wide, but Nick was right under our noses.

Nick has set up a youth drop-in centre a couple of days a week in the middle of Beenleigh and his team is working with some very disadvantaged and broken young people. We are feeding many of those young people in our Friday night youth activities. It is exciting to see the enthusiasm of these young people as they experience authentic community and Christian love.

At the same time, we have finished the construction of our community hub, and we are seeing the youth numbers swell. Friday night activities include Praise dance, Boys and Girls Brigade, and Impakt Youth with over 100 high schoolers attending. We have opened our coffee shop on these nights, and we are taking time to sit with parents and families building meaningful connections. God is really at work.

Already we have seen a number of youth come to faith in Christ, and many others listening intently to the gospel message each week. We are praising God for what he is doing among our local youth who are desperately looking for hope. We know that Jesus is the answer. There is a harvest coming and we are beginning to see it.


**READY FOR HARVEST STORY:**

## **VIETNAM GRACE CHURCH BRISBANE MISSION TRIP**

From 13 February to 9 Mar, following Jesus's call, Vietnam Grace Mission Team, led by Senior Pastor Hoa My Trinh, travelled to Vietnam. Their mission was to bring the Gospel to church members' families, baptise believers from the previous mission trip, and visit the churches and ministries which have been supported by Vietnam Grace Church for many years.







*Day 1*

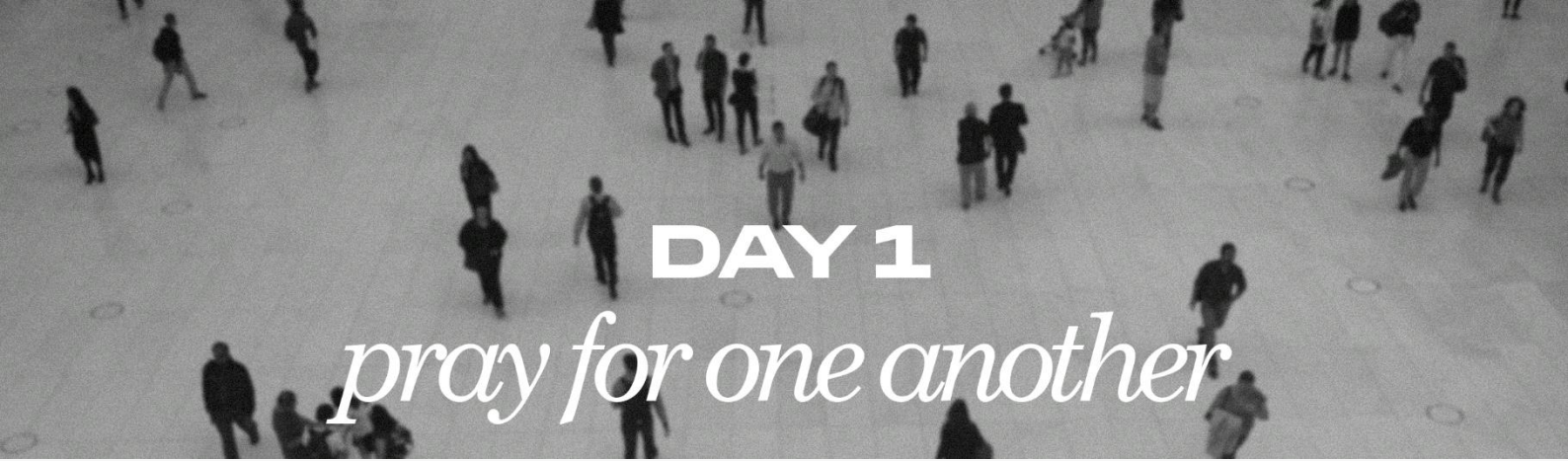
# A PLENTIFUL HARVEST

The team travelled thousands of kilometres to 10 different provinces, from rural areas to highland villages. They visited many churches, more than 60 retired pastors and pastor widows, more than 30 acting pastors and church leaders, and hundreds of Christians with their non-Christian families and friends. Through God's grace and by His power, they were able to minister to the blind, the lepers, the sick, the demon-possessed, the poor, the forgotten, and those who were unreachable by local communities. To share Jesus' love, they brought gifts, medications, oils, food (2 tons of rice), and other necessities. Most importantly, they brought the message of love and salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The team experienced huge challenges of transportation, health and spiritual attack. However, God's sovereignty reigned. He led the team safely to the places they were to go and then back home one Australia. God saved and encouraged the lowly in spirit.

As a result of the trip, 26 people confessed their faith in Jesus as new believers, 12 people recommitted their hearts to Christ who died for them, and 11 people were baptised. God is at work in Vietnam as well as Australia.





**DAY 1**

*pray for one another*

"Lord, you know our community. You know that the Enemy has a foothold in this area and it has become a stronghold for New Age and Occult philosophies and practices. But we stand on these two truths from Your Word: That 'our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms' (Ephesians 6:12) AND as God's children, 'greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.' (1 John 4:4). LORD, please break through the darkness with the glorious light of Your powerful saving presence in this place. This we boldly ask, and so believe and wait for in faith - in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen."

#### **Agnes Water Baptist Church**

That people will be led by God's Spirit to consider intercultural ministry through Baptist Mission Australia.

#### **Baptist Mission Australia**

That we see God move in the hearts of those who are yet to discover His perfect and complete love for them; that He prepares our hearts to welcome and disciple those who come to accept Him as their Lord and Saviour.

#### **Beachside Church**

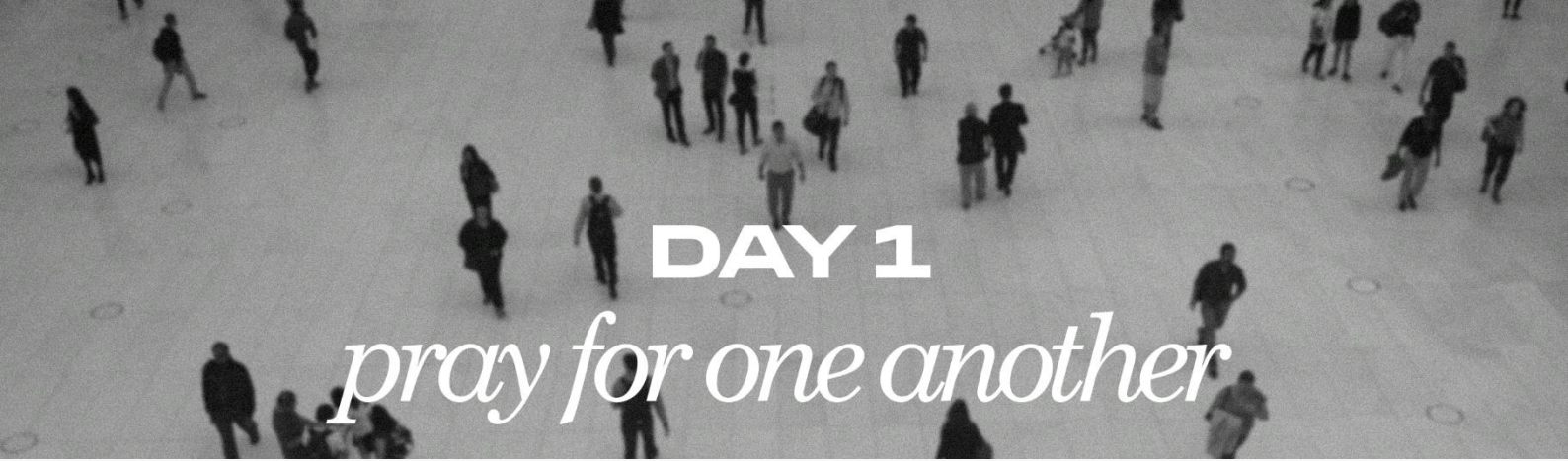
That our Holiday Kids Club (26th - 30th June) will shine Christ and many will respond by putting their faith and trust in Jesus.

#### **Beaudesert Baptist**

We are praying for three people from the community to be saved, baptised and zealous followers of the Lord Jesus.

#### **Bellbowrie and District Baptist Church**





**DAY 1**

*pray for one another*

1. Please pray that the Lord will lead our church, help us to grow spiritually and remain united. We have a goal together that someday we will have our own worship building, please pray for us that we will stay strong in our faith while waiting for His fulfillment.
2. Please pray for our Karen people that flee their home due to an ongoing civil war and violence in Burma. They have no places to stay and are living with fear.

### **Bethany Karen Baptist Church**

Pray with us that God's Spirit would move through the preaching and teaching of the good news, and through sharing our stories and, as a result, we will rejoice in seeing over 10 new Christians in our church.

### **Taringa Baptist Church**







# Day 2

# THE HARVESTERS

## MATTHEW 10:1-8

<sup>1</sup> Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. <sup>2</sup> These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. <sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. <sup>6</sup> Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. <sup>7</sup> As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' <sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

## THE HARVESTERS

This passage doesn't actually mention the words "harvest" or "crop." So, what is it doing in this series on the harvest? Well, it's important to understand that the original records of Jesus' life had no chapters or verses. To help in reading and referencing the text, chapters were added in the 13th century and verses in the 16th century. Originally, Matthew's gospel was one long scroll and this passage followed straight after the passage we read yesterday. The original scroll would have read like this (in Greek of course, not English):

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness ... These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

That was a very fast answer to prayer. The disciples prayed for harvesters and then Jesus sent them straight out to bring in the harvest. They were the answer to their own prayer. This is the first





## Day 2

# THE HARVESTERS

time that Matthew mentions the "Twelve." Maybe the disciples he asked to pray (9:38) were a wider group and just the close band (the Twelve disciples) were commissioned by Jesus to go out into the harvest fields. We don't know exactly. But certainly, some of the pray-ers became the answer to their prayers.

It's so easy to see evangelism as someone else's job. It's true that some Christians are more gifted in evangelistic reaping. When I church planted with Mark, this became obvious to me. I would preach the gospel as clearly and as passionately as I could and get a meagre response, and then Mark would say a few words after I had spoken and people would respond readily. He was constantly leading people to Jesus. We're not all strongly gifted in evangelism like Mark. But neither were the disciples. They were commissioned by Jesus as harvesters, not necessarily gifted as harvesters. Being part of Jesus' inner circle meant they had a job to join Jesus in bringing in the harvest. Even Judas was included. Jesus' commissioning of the Twelve reminds me of Paul's instructions to his protégé Timothy: "Do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5). Paul is saying, "It's your calling Timothy whether you feel adequate or not."

I believe that it's your calling too. With the fields ready for harvest, we need as many reapers as possible. Recently, there have been sad stories from farmers of good fruit rotting on trees because no one was available to pick it. Imagine if this is happening spiritually. Imagine if people were ready to receive Jesus but there was no-one to tell them. How distressing. You are part of the answer to your prayer for workers to reap the harvest.

If this worries you, that's okay. I'm sure it worried the Twelve too. But Jesus promised spiritual authority and power to them and you have even greater access to God's power through his Spirit. Muster your courage, cry out for help, and get out into the harvest.







*Day 2*  
**THE  
HARVESTERS**

**READY FOR HARVEST STORY:**

**MALYON THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE**

At Malyon Theological College, I teach a class on missions. It's a Zoom class where everyone is online. (This is a part of the new world of tertiary education that we are embracing.) A few weeks ago, I was concluding my missions lectures when one of my students asked whether he would be able to share briefly before we closed. This is not a usual occurrence, but obviously God had put something on his heart, so I gave him the go-ahead.

He shared how the lectures of the past few weeks had deeply impacted him. He understood in a fresh way God's call on his life and recognised that he needed to be completely surrendered to God for whatever part God had for him to play in His great mission in this world. As I listened to him, I praised God for what he was doing in raising up workers for the huge harvest to come.

He then went on to tell how the following Sunday he had invited a large group of his friends to gather after church. He told them how God had been challenging him. After a time of prayer and worship together, many of his friends also resolved to be completely surrendered to God for whatever part he had for them in bringing in the harvest. God is raising up harvest workers.







# DAY 2

## *pray for one another*

We're praying that God will lead us to where and how He is wanting us to church plant in the future. We collectively believe that God has called us to be a planting church but we want to be effective in His calling for us for when, where and how!

### **Bracken Ridge Baptist Church**

Please pray that QCCC can maximise the influence it has with Queensland's emerging generation, to show them the goodness of life in Jesus, and inspire them to explore the gospel for themselves. We pray that as champions and catalysts of the Judeo-Christian worldview we can be agents of regeneration for the gospel message in a contemporary way.

### **Bundaberg Baptist Church**

Exceptional sign up for Alpha across Carinity in term 3, including schools, prisons, and staff, and increased opportunities for QB churches to connect with Carinity sites to build strong relational Kingdom links.

### **Carinity**

That there would be a breakthrough in church growth at Churchill and a revival of sorts with new people especially the younger generation.

### **Churchill Baptist Church**

Lord God please bring us under great conviction about your holiness so that we will be committed to obey and respond to the harvest around us. And Lord Jesus we ask you to unleash your Holy Spirit to bring revival to our city of Bundaberg.

### **Bundaberg Baptist Church**

Full time associate pastor

City Tabernacle Baptist





# DAY 2

## *pray for one another*

Please pray for the Real Life and EXLR8 seminars, in single session and full 2 and a half day format as they are prepared, refined and delivered to Christian and public schools, leading to thousands of students (year 7 – 11) having questions of Jesus and their life choices raised and their current thoughts challenged, with repeat school bookings following for future programs.

QCCC

Multiply our outreach to see the number of people coming to faith double in the next 12 months.

Bridgeman Baptist





Day 3

# IT'S TIME FOR HARVEST

## JOHN 4:31-38

<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." <sup>32</sup> But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." <sup>33</sup> Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" <sup>34</sup> "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. <sup>35</sup> Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. <sup>36</sup> Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. <sup>37</sup> Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour."

## IT'S TIME FOR HARVEST

In this Scripture, the disciples had just returned from buying food in town at Jesus' request. While he waited for them by the well outside town, Jesus had a powerful spiritual conversation with a Samaritan woman. Her brief dialogue with Jesus left this lady rushing back to town convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. It was the kind of interaction that made Jesus spiritually alive. He had seen God work through his obedience and he wasn't hungry any more. You've probably had a similar experience. You've stepped out on a limb and God has moved in power. There's nothing like it. It beats a good meal any day.

Then Jesus goes on to quote a saying: "It's still four months until harvest." Bible scholars have no idea where this saying comes from. There's no sign of it in any other literature, but then that's understandable if it was a local saying. No historian is going to record a village proverb quoted by simple Galileans. It probably originated with homegrown farmers describing the break they had between the planting and nurturing season and the harvesting season. Once the crops were growing well, they knew they had four months before the hectic work of harvesting. So the saying probably meant something like, "Lighten up. We have plenty of time. We don't need to rush things."

Maybe that's how the disciples saw the ministry of Jesus. They were in Samaritan territory where they didn't even have a calling to mission, so there was time to catch their breath. There was no







Day 3

# IT'S TIME FOR HARVEST

urgency. They had sowed some spiritual seed and seen God at work, but whatever they believed Jesus was going to do to fully establish his kingdom seemed to still be a long way off. "It's still four months until harvest."

Jesus' response was, "Just open your eyes and look at the spiritual opportunities. This is not the time for having a rest." From Jesus' brief conversation with an outcast woman at the well, a bunch of Samaritans were already heading out to the well from town ready to put their faith in Jesus. This was not the lull between planting and harvesting. God's kingdom was already on the move. The harvest was being reaped.

There certainly are sowing seasons when we just have to be faithful as we love and serve our not-yet-Christian friends with very little obvious fruit. That's fine. But we don't want to confuse the seasons. It would be sad if we were patiently sowing seed when we should be reaping a great harvest. We need to "open our eyes," take them off ourselves, and look at the fields. What is God saying? What is God doing? How much spiritual hunger is there? If it's harvest time, let's get out there and share the gospel asking God to do miracles and calling people to follow Jesus. It's time to bring in the harvest. Let's get on board with what God is already doing.

But don't get carried away with the results we will see. As Jesus points out to his disciples: "Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour" (4:38). As we see God drawing many to faith, we praise him for those that have served and shared and prayed before us. As harvesters, we're standing on their shoulders.

## READY FOR HARVEST STORY:

### **GIN GIN BAPTIST**

Gin Gin is a very small Baptist Church of around 20 people about 370km on the highway north of Brisbane. For over 20 years it has continued to serve the community through the faithfulness of the local Christ followers and outside visiting speakers. All along, the church members have been committed and faithful in praying for revival.



A photograph showing the silhouettes of a group of people standing on a hill or beach, looking out at a bright sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong glow and long shadows. The people are in various poses, some looking towards the sun, others looking away.

*Day 3*

# IT'S TIME FOR HARVEST

Greg Carle and his wife Gwenda accepted God's call to Gin Gin in the second half of 2022 and God is at work in exciting ways. New people are coming to church regularly and last Sunday they ran out of communion cups for the first time. But the best thing of all is that they have found out that the baptistry leaks.

After years and years without any baptisms, a young guy indicated that he wanted to be baptised. The week before the baptismal service, Greg told the congregation that if anyone else wanted to be baptised, they should bring along a change of clothes to the service. That Sunday three people were baptised. It was a day of great rejoicing.

There is a growing expectation of the power of God to change lives and grow his church. The embers of God's fire are burning in Gin Gin. And we will have to get our baptistry fixed!





**DAY 3**

# *pray for one another*

Please pray for a harvest of teenagers in our area. There are many teenagers here without Christ, with some walking past our church morning & afternoon on the way to and from Cleveland High School.

**Cleveland Baptist Church**

That we would have a passion for prayer and the lost and be bold in sharing the gospel.

**Coolum Beach Baptist Church**

The God will continue to lead us, individually and as a church, into our region, to work with Him in growing His kingdom.

**Longreach Baptist Church**

That God will raise up more leaders with a commitment to the local church here at FCBC.

**Fraser Coast Baptist Church**

Through this campsite and the interactions with all staff onsite, that people's lives will be changed because of the LOVE they feel from God, that they will be REFRESHED and experience a REAWAKENING of their love for Jesus Christ.

**QCCC Brookfield**

God, we want to see Revival in our time, in our generation. You've done it before, would you do it again? Jesus, would you fill our church with those searching for you, draw people close to yourself, send us out with boldness and courage to shine your light in our world!

**Gateway Baptist Church**

For a Church property in our suburb.

**Forest Lake Baptist Church**





*Day 4*

# DON'T BE DISAPPOINTED WITH THE HARVEST

## MARK 4:1-8

<sup>1</sup> Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. <sup>2</sup> He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: <sup>3</sup> "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup> As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup> Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. <sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

## DON'T BE DISAPPOINTED WITH THE HARVEST

The crowds listening to Jesus were now so big that they couldn't all hear him as he preached on the beach. Jesus' solution was to use a boat as his podium. That's a first for me. I've never heard of anyone else speaking from a boat, but it worked for Jesus. I guess his voice carried well over the water. Obviously, it was harvest time. The huge crowds were hungry and open. Huge responses seemed assured. But that's not the whole story.

As we reap the harvest, there will be times when it appears that everyone is interested in our Christian faith. God will open doors that we've never seen open before. Many people will be swept into the kingdom. This is exciting and it's what we're praying for. This is what happens in harvest times. But it's not the whole story. Jesus reminds us of this in his parable.

Jesus knew that the eager crowds were not all going to prosper in his new kingdom. Some on the lakeside that day were just there for the show. They marvelled at the miracles and listened to the



*Day 4*

# **DON'T BE DISAPPOINTED WITH THE HARVEST**

teaching, but they were oblivious to Jesus' real kingdom call. They were like a hard path (4:4). The "seed" was snatched away by Satan before it could take root.

I had been discussing Christian faith with Simon over a number of months and eventually I asked him along to a church service where I was preaching. I preached the best evangelistic sermon I could muster, making the gospel as clear as possible through proclamation, video and illustration. After the service, Simon came up to me with sparkling eyes. I could see that he finally grasped it. He excitedly said, "Now I understand what you've been saying: I just have to be more spiritual." Simon was the "path" – well-meaning and interested, but unable to really hear the gospel. We must continue to love the path people, but you can't help feeling sad. I'm sure Jesus felt the same way.

Some of the potential harvest will grow in "rocky soil." These are often the people who get most excited about the good news. They love the idea of God's grace and forgiveness. They are passionate about Jesus. But when things get tough, they fade away. They've been living on emotions and dreams but their roots have not gone down deep into Jesus. They have not counted the cost of being a disciple of Jesus. Their faith dies as quickly as it took root. That's really sad, but Jesus said that we can expect it.

Some of the potential harvest will grow in thorny soil. These people will look spiritually healthy for some time, but eventually, their faith in Jesus will be squeezed out by their successes or problems. Maybe they will still call themselves followers of Jesus but there will be no fruit to prove it. That's really sad, but Jesus said that we can expect it.

Don't be disillusioned or disappointed when you find these different soils because Jesus experienced them too. But he promised that some of the harvest will prosper beyond your wildest dreams. The fruit God produces through them will be incredible (4:8). For example, Sarah gave her life to Jesus in her late twenties after struggling with all sorts of abuse and sin. Now she is a school chaplain.

So when you commit to help with the harvest and nothing much happens, remember this Jesus story. Seed sowing can be disappointing work at times. Some will be resistant and others will fall



*Day 4*

# DON'T BE DISAPPOINTED WITH THE HARVEST

away. But we mustn't give up or get discouraged because there really will be a miraculous harvest. Continue to believe and persevere. The harvest is coming.

## READY FOR HARVEST STORY:

### CARINITY PRISON CHAPLAINCY

As a prison chaplain, I entered one of the secure units and chatted briefly with Mandy (a keen Christian) who introduced me to her new cellmate Judy. As Judy started to go outside into the small yard, I asked her if she would like to sit down and chat. She was wary, not knowing what to say to a chaplain, but I assured her that I did not bite and that she could talk to me about anything. I could see that she was struggling but she decided eventually to stay and chat.

I invited Judy to talk about her life outside of prison. She shared that before her prison sentence, she lived with her mother and her two young children. She would give her partner (now in the men's prison) her money, and in return, he would 'inject' her. Judy admitted that her life was inevitably heading towards a very bad end. I asked Judy what she thought about Jesus. She explained that she knew very little. Her mother attended church at Easter and Christmas, but she didn't. Yet Judy seemed very open.

Then God reminded me about Mandy, her cellmate. Coming to prison had turned Mandy's life around as she met Jesus inside. I asked Judy if Mandy had talked about Jesus to which she replied, "Yes she talks about him all the time!" When the guards indicated our time was up, I suggested that she chat with Mandy about Jesus. It seemed to me that God was doing something special in Judy's heart.

When the next chaplain visited, Mandy and Judy couldn't wait to tell her the good news. Mandy had led Judy into a relationship with Jesus. Judy had given her life to the Lord. When she was released the following Monday, she left prison with a new eternal purpose.





*Day 4*

# **DON'T BE DISAPPOINTED WITH THE HARVEST**

My heart is full of joy, and I trust that the Lord will look after her as she journeys towards a new life free from the guilt of sin and free of her costly addiction. God is truly the Lord of the harvest (Matthew 9:38). Neither Judy nor I would ever have guessed where that conversation would lead when we sat down to chat.

[Names have been changed. Find out about prison chaplaincy: [www.insideoutchaplaincy.org.au](http://www.insideoutchaplaincy.org.au)]



# DAY 4

## *pray for one another*

We ask for eyes to see and ears to hear our Lord's guidance. For the courage and strength to mobilize when it's God's time to do so. Until then, we ask for patience and faith to wait, growing together. That when the time comes to move, we will move in unity. That we would defend and nurture the more vulnerable standing alongside them as they take their place in the Kingdom. That as we move, our feet will be fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace which tears down barriers which divide.

### **Northern Beaches Connections**

Provision for our planned building of a childcare centre on our site. That it would be a place of building faith in young people in our community and connecting with families in the area.

### **Connect Baptist Church Deagon**

We pray that each one in the congregation will win one this year - to salvation in Christ or a ministry event or a program or home for a meal with a message.

### **Gladstone Baptist Church**

We are a small group and all of our members need to be inspired to 'gossip the gospel' and bring new people in.

### **Cooroy Community Baptist Church**

A renewed heart for the lost that drives us into our spheres of influence seeking out people of peace!

### **Outlook Christian Church**

To see revival in our church, our city of Hervey Bay and our region of the Fraser Coast. May we see salvations like never before, baptism line ups going out the door, signs and wonders, hearts fully surrendered to God and seeing the captives set free in Jesus name! Come Holy Spirit and have your way among us.

### **Hervey Bay Baptist Church**



# DAY 4

## *pray for one another*

We pray that the ministry of QCCC Noosa Outdoor Education Centre would grow and continue to facilitate a space in Creation for churches, youth groups and Christian fellowship gatherings, and that transformation for all guests that use this site would bring personal and organisational revival in their own unique spaces. We also pray that every school group that attends this site would see Jesus in a tangible way while on camp here and that every teacher would experience the gift of genuine hospitality.

QCCC Noosa Outdoor Education Centre

That we would have God's vision in expanding our facilities, are faith-filled for provision, and that we follow Jesus' way for bringing transformation in our community.

Hope Community Church





Day 5

# THE HARVEST WILL SURPRISE US

## MARK 4:26-29

<sup>26</sup> He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup> Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. <sup>28</sup> All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. <sup>29</sup> As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

## THE HARVEST WILL SURPRISE US

Mark leaves us in the dark on the meaning of this parable. Maybe the disciples never asked Jesus for an explanation. Biblical scholars have advocated many different possible interpretations, all of which reveal an aspect of truth about the harvest. Let's explore a few of the options.

1. Jesus' emphasis could be on the inevitability of the harvest. The farmer scatters the seed but has little understanding of what happens after that. He watches in wonder as it grows until the time of harvest. In a similar way, we share the good news of Jesus (scatter the seed), but can't open peoples' eyes to the truth of the gospel. Once the seed is sown, God does his work. Despite our lack of understanding, the harvest is assured, even if it takes some time. It's going to happen. We don't know how, but God will do his work.

2. Jesus' emphasis could be on the patience of the farmer. He just has to wait and continue his routine until the time for harvest, and then he can start reaping. Some of us have had to wait a long time to bring in the harvest that God has promised. That's okay. You can't hurry God. We don't lose heart or give up. We love people, share the good news, and patiently follow and obey Jesus until the time comes for reaping.

3. Jesus' emphasis could be on the lack of the farmer's contribution. It doesn't matter if the farmer is talented or hard-working or not, the crop grows anyway. It's easy for us to think that the churches or individuals with the most resources or greatest abilities will produce the greatest crop. That's not





Day 5

# THE HARVEST WILL SURPRISE US

true. For example, research shows that church plants are often more effective in evangelism than larger churches. The power to save is in the gospel (the seed) not in the capability of those who share it. It doesn't matter if you are unsure or feel incapable, just talk about Jesus and the harvest will come.

4. Jesus' emphasis could be on the hiddenness of God's work. Although the farmer doesn't understand it, something is happening in the seeds that will become apparent when the grain is ripe. We often have no idea what God is doing. We can count people and finances, but these may not be accurate signs of God's hidden work. It's in harvest times that we see the results of God's action behind the scenes. You may be surprised by what God is already doing in the lives of your friends.

5. Jesus' emphasis could be on the sudden activity needed when the harvest is ripe. The farmer lives a normal routine of sleeping and getting up until the harvest comes. Then it's all hands on deck. There is much to be done. Don't think that your life will be much easier when God works in power. A time of reaping will ask more of us than other times. There will be so many new Christians to disciple. We will be stretched and challenged. God will ask more of us.

In Mark's Gospel, this parable sits with the parable of the soils and the parable of the mustard seed. As we saw yesterday, the parable of the soils emphasises the challenges of reaping the harvest as well as the huge harvest that will ensue. The parable of the mustard seed shows that while the kingdom starts small, it will flourish. It appears that the common theme in this section of Mark's Gospel is the size of the harvest, so whatever the main emphasis of Jesus (and all of the above are true), this parable emphasises that a great harvest is coming.

The work of God is surprising and astonishing. There will be disappointments and discouragements and sometimes it will seem that nothing is happening. But God is always at work and in time there will be a huge harvest. Our role is to share the gospel and pray. To wait expectantly and pray. And then to bring in the harvest when God says that it's time to reap. You can be sure that the harvest will be greater than we could imagine.



*Day 5*

# THE HARVEST WILL SURPRISE US

**READY FOR HARVEST STORY:**

## **GATEWAY BAPTIST CHURCH LOGAN**

I heard someone once say, "The light of Jesus shines the brightest in the darkest places." Logan is a broken community, but we have seen Jesus powerfully at work. Five years ago, we started with 44 people gathered in a local café. Since then we have seen 149 people make first-time decisions to follow Jesus and many get baptised. God has grown a multicultural church of all ages, socio-economic backgrounds and every other diversity possible.

Recently we baptised a lady who had spent almost 20 years in prison for drug trafficking and who walked through our doors straight out of prison. After a journey of ups and downs and lots of questions, she gave her life to Jesus. She stood in the waters of baptism a few weeks back and said, "I was never ever going to walk through the doors of a church, and never thought I would be baptised, but now I love Jesus!"

A couple arrived from Kenya in early 2022 and came to church not long after. They have found a community in their new country where they are loved and accepted. They were baptised at the start of the year together.

We have had story after story of broken people finding Jesus and a community where they are accepted. We are believing for more, but God has already been bringing in a harvest. We have grown from 44 to over 200 on Sundays now. The light of Jesus shines the brightest in the darkest places!







# DAY 5

## *pray for one another*

Many from our church would invite one person to Alpha in Term 3.

**Gateway Baptist Church - Redlands Campus**

That the war in Ukraine will end.

**Slavic Baptist Church**

Praying for a stirring of hearts resulting in revived faith within, and new faith of their friends and families! May His Kingdom come and his will be done in and through us!

**Northreach**

We would value prayer for unity through the outworking of our value statements, God Centred, People Focussed, Mission Oriented, that as we pursue these, we gain and maintain a right perspective of our love, care and support for each other and this flows over to the wider community.

**Maryborough Baptist Church**

That God raise up godly shepherds to minister into his churches and that no church in Queensland would struggle to find a pastor.

**QB Pastoral Services**

That by the end of 2023 we would see 24 people put their faith in Jesus for the first time through Lifepoint ministries.

**Life Point Church**

We pray that we would see a mighty move of God in revival here on the Sunshine Coast.

**Lifepointe Sunshine Coast**



# Day 6

## GOD'S FINAL HARVEST

### MATTHEW 13:24-30

<sup>24</sup> Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup> But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. <sup>26</sup> When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. <sup>27</sup> "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' <sup>28</sup> "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' <sup>29</sup> "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

### GOD'S FINAL HARVEST

Fortunately, we have some help in understanding this parable because Jesus explains it to his disciples (Matt. 13:36-43). It's important to note that the image of the harvest changes with this story. Instead of the harvest being a great reaping that draws many into God's kingdom, in this parable, the harvest represents the final judgment at the end of the age (Matt. 13:39). This is the end-times harvest referred to in Rev. 14:15-20.

We recently top-dressed our thick, but slow-growing, Zoysia lawn. In some places, we used a lot of top dressing and the grass died underneath the added soil. This was an open invitation for weeds and all sorts of grass types to invade the rich topsoil. I have no idea where the seeds came from, but our lawn became a mess. We knew that our only hope was to deal with the weeds quickly, but unfortunately, some of the numerous new grasses looked a lot like Zoysia to our inexperienced eyes. Sometimes we ripped up weeds and at other times it turned out to be new clumps of Zoysia. We tried hard but, in the end, we gave up. Our lawn is now Zoysia plus.

According to Jesus, that's what is happening in his kingdom. The Zoysia and the look-alike weeds are growing together. It's not usually our job to decide which is the real thing. We are a mixed



*Day 6*

# **GOD'S FINAL HARVEST**

bunch. Throughout its history, the church has done some wonderful things and some very wrong things. This is evidence that good seeds and weeds have grown together. Weeds get in with the healthy grass, and often we struggle to tell them apart. It's difficult to know what is really driving people or what their behaviour is like when they are not in the spotlight. This is frustrating at times, but we need to accept that it's what God allows for the moment.

But don't think that it doesn't matter to God. He sees right through us. God has no doubts as to who is with him and who is not, and in the end, he will reveal all. When the final harvest comes, Jesus says that the weeds will be thrown "into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (13:42). We thank God for his mercy towards us, but we also celebrate his justice. At the moment, it may seem that people get away with evil as the wheat and weeds grow together. There is often nothing we can do about it. However, remember that God sees and remembers. He knows what weeds look like. He will finally expose and punish. Our God is both loving and just.

This parable has at least two implications for harvest workers. First, what we are doing is crucial work. We're not only sharing the good news of a loving God who reaches out to us through the sacrifice of Jesus, and who offers freedom and life and purpose in this life. We are also sharing hope for eternity – freedom from God's certain judgment and assurance that God's people will "shine like the sun" in his beautiful new kingdom. There is a huge amount at stake.

Second, our role is not to decide who is worthy of God's grace. As soon as we make some specific behaviours the test of true faith, we are trying to do God's job and we are sure to root out good seeds along with the weeds. I'm not saying that we don't encourage biblical lifestyle and character. That is what discipleship is all about. And there is a place for church discipline, especially when hypocrisy is detected. But God's grace and justice go way beyond ours and so our primary role is to love and accept and forgive and share the gospel and let God do his work in his way.





*Day 6*

# GOD'S FINAL HARVEST

**READY FOR HARVEST STORY:**

## **HILLCREST CHRISTIAN COLLEGE**

It was a normal chapel service for the Middle School of Hillcrest Christian College (Reedy Creek, Gold Coast), a QB school. 500 students and staff filed into the auditorium. The band was playing. After the usual welcome, the students worshipped and then listened to the guest speaker. Behind the scenes, a group of people had gathered to pray for God's Spirit to be poured out. This year the School's Executive, together with Reedy Creek Baptist (who planted the school) are praying for revival. Suddenly, towards the end of the chapel service, God turned the ordinary into something extraordinary.

When the speaker gave the appeal for people to come forward and accept Christ as Lord and Saviour, hundreds of students streamed to the front. It was incredible. One student told me that the service was "inspirational". During the rest of the day, students were given the opportunity to be prayed for or to debrief their experience. The following week, about two weeks before Easter, God moved again, this time during the Senior School's service. Hundreds again came forward.

Letters went home to families explaining what had been happening. The school invited youth pastors across the southern Gold Coast to come on campus to disciple those who desired it, and students and their families were invited to attend local churches. On Easter Sunday at Currumbin Beach, Reedy Creek Baptist baptised two students (with their parent's permission) who had responded in chapel. Mosaic Baptist also says that this revival impacted their teenagers. I have spoken with several parents who have told me that what is happening is still having a significant impact on their children. One teacher, who was on long service leave when God moved, has said that the atmosphere of the school has changed significantly. Praise God for what He is doing and please pray for the 1600 students at the school.



# DAY 6

## *pray for one another*

Praying that God will continue to keep Christian RI in schools and open new doors for RI into schools (including Hilder Road SS) that are presently closed. Also, that God would raise up new teachers for this amazing ministry so that the Good News of Jesus may continue to be effectively shared with students and teachers throughout Qld.

### **The Gap Baptist**

Dear God, we lift up the QCCC Internship to you and thank you for the youthful energy the young adults bring. We pray that you would be transforming their hearts and renewing their minds, making them more like Jesus. Please build in them a passion to impact each child they work with for you, as they may be the only Godly experience that these children have in their life. And God, please help us who are leading the interns to lead in wisdom and humility. Use this internship for your glory. Amen

### **Queensland Conference & Camping Centres (QCCC)**

That God would expand our witness in the Brisbane Valley as we move into our new premises.

### **Toogoolawah District Baptist Church**

We ask that the Lord would move in our hearts so that we passionately look for opportunities to share his Gospel with our community and that through the convicting of his Holy Spirit we would see people come to know him as Lord and Saviour.

### **Renew Baptist Church**

We're seeing that as we participate in Jesus' mission to be disciples who make disciples that God is multiplying his church. God is inviting us to be praying with greater trust in him and we're asking Jesus what big step of obedience he wants us to be taking into the future as we multiply.

### **Rivers Baptist Church**



# DAY 6

## *pray for one another*

That God would lead us to find a building to lease/buy for our church start up and Karenni congregation in Logan.

**New Heart Baptist**

Thank you Father for the ministry of the Gospel of salvation in this community through this church for 70+ years. Our prayer is as we look forward to the rest of 2023, this ministry will strengthen and flourish as we serve and honour You and glorify your name.

**Salisbury Baptist Church**

We are heading out to Emerald, Longreach and back from June 23 to July 9: Praying for safety and that God will encourage one and all. That we will be servants and His name Glorified.

**KawanaLife Baptist Church**





Day 7

# PASSION FOR THE HARVEST

## ROMANS 1:11-17

<sup>11</sup> I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— <sup>12</sup> that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. <sup>13</sup> I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles. <sup>14</sup> I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. <sup>15</sup> That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. <sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. <sup>17</sup> For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

## PASSION FOR THE HARVEST

I know this passage does not come from the gospels, but I had to add something about Paul's great passion for and expectation of a harvest. Let me give some background first. Paul had been commissioned by God to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Rom. 11:13). It's not that he avoided sharing the gospel with his Jewish brothers and sisters. In fact, he often started his evangelistic campaigns in Gentile cities at the Jewish synagogue. But Paul's calling was to Gentiles ("Greeks and barbarians" as he puts it in 1:14).

Yet Paul had never been to Rome, the centre of the Roman Gentile world. It wasn't for lack of trying. As you can imagine, Paul was desperate to preach the gospel in the great city of Rome. Of course, it was incredibly dangerous preaching the Christian gospel in the seat of Roman power, but I don't think that deterred Paul. He was not ashamed of the gospel (1:16). But for some reason it hadn't worked out (1:13). Maybe his responsibility for the numerous Gentile churches kept him too busy.

But the thing that stands out to me in this passage is Paul's incredible confidence in the power of the gospel. He has no doubt that when he gets to Rome there will be a harvest (1:13). Paul has seen this many times before in other Gentile cities and he is sure that there will be a great reaping





*Day 7*

# PASSION FOR THE HARVEST

in Rome. Paul was a gifted evangelist, but he knows that it's the power of God through the gospel that brings salvation, not the ability of the messenger.

None of us has been designated as the apostle to the Gentiles, so we need to be careful not to apply everything that Paul says to our situation. You may want to go to Rome as a tourist, but probably not as an evangelist. However, surely Paul's confidence in the gospel and the harvest that it will bring should be ours. I hope these devotions and stories have stirred up faith in you. God is at work and a harvest is coming as we share the gospel. We need to pray for renewed confidence in God's power to save through the simple truth of the gospel.

But even if you are feeling nothing. Even if these devotions have not produced a renewed belief and hope. Even if you can't see that the fields are white for harvest around you. Even if you don't believe that God will work powerfully as you share the gospel. Please take note of Paul's main motivation for preaching the gospel in Rome. He says, "I am obligated" to those who don't know Jesus (1:14). He recognises that there are numerous Gentiles who don't know about Jesus and he feels responsible before God to share the good news with them. We too have an obligation to our non-Christian friends, family and neighbours who have yet to believe the gospel and be saved.

I don't want to give the impression that all we have to do is share the gospel and get people saved and then we're done. Paul is writing to Roman Christians when he says that he wants to "preach the gospel also to you" (1:15). The gospel has implications that go far beyond our initial salvation. Christians need to be saturated in and discipled by the gospel. Bringing in the harvest also involves teaching Christians how to live by faith. Discipleship is key.

Let me finish with some lyrics from one of my favourite 1990s songs emerging from the revival in Belfast: "Oh, these are the days of the harvest, For the fields are as white in Your world, And we are the labourers in Your vineyard, Declaring the word of the Lord!"





*Day 7*

# PASSION FOR THE HARVEST

**READY FOR HARVEST STORY:**

## **KEPERRA BAPTIST**

We haven't had a drummer in our church for a while now at Keperra Baptist. But if we did, we wouldn't really have room for them right now. The drum kit normally sits on top of our baptistry, but the lid has been off the baptistry every few weeks lately.

We hadn't had a baptism for a couple of years, but since February we've had a steady stream of people responding to Jesus by wanting to publicly profess their faith and be baptised. We've already (April) seen five people baptised. It began with a woman who was introduced to Jesus last year, by one of our ladies whom she met at work. Her life has turned around, and it's been beautiful to see our church family share this journey with her. Three of our youth and one of our young adults have also been baptised. They've all grown up in the church and shared wonderfully encouraging testimonies of the faithful, consistent witness, over many years, of parents and the whole church family. And there are at least four or five others who are planning to be baptised in the coming months.

Then, just after Easter, two men became believers on consecutive days. One had been witnessed to for a long time by our Monday morning prayer group as he comes to empty the charity bins on the front of our property. Another, caught in a hard spot, contacted the neighbour he grew up next to (one of our church family), and was led to faith.

To be honest, we haven't done much differently in this season, but God has clearly been at work. It has been his timing for us to reap a harvest. It's been such a delight to see the diversity of ways God has worked in people's lives to bring them to salvation, and it has been so enriching for our church to celebrate new faith every few weeks. Praise God!





*Day 7*

# PASSION FOR THE HARVEST

**READY FOR HARVEST STORY:**

## **RIVERLIFE BAPTIST CHURCH**

God is working in new powerful ways as the gospel is shared. For example, God has opened a door for us into a local youth detention centre and miracles have happened. Many young people have been healed physically and released from spiritual oppression. 35 have decided to follow Jesus and two have been baptised. We've given out 100 Bibles and the young people are now leading their own Bible studies. The girls in the centre have a gospel-weaving circle where they share the gospel while they weave baskets together. We watch what God is doing in awe. All we've done is obey the Holy Spirit's prompting, soak the whole endeavour in prayer, and share the love of Jesus with everyone we've come across. God has done the rest. A place that is normally marked by hopelessness and darkness is being filled with love, hope and light.

In a parallel way, God is working in our church community. In response to the invitation to believe, be baptised and follow Jesus, we have seen more than 100 people baptised since Father's Day last year. As we speak out the good news, make the invitation, and open the baptismal tank, people are responding. One young man had heard and seen some of these baptisms when attending a service with a friend. He didn't normally attend church but wanted to know more. When he found out what baptism meant, he realised that he needed to follow Jesus first – so he made a decision straight away. He was baptised the next Sunday. Then, on Easter Sunday this year, he brought his best mate to church to be baptised, after leading him to the Lord a few days earlier. It's starting to feel a bit like the Book of Acts.



# DAY 7

## *pray for one another*

That we may know the depth of God's love in Jesus.

**Sugar Reef Baptist Church**

Please remember and uphold the ministry of QCCC as it seeks to influence the next generation of Queenslanders in contemporary ways to understand, follow and live out the gospel in today's world.

**QLD Baptists' Camping Ministry**

Our prayer and desire is that we will journey together into a closer, abiding relationship with Jesus. That we will learn from Jesus' teaching and lifestyle. And that we would become more and more attuned to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we listen for God's new vision for our Church.

**Tin Can Bay Community Church**

We would love prayer that the name of Jesus is made known in our community. Pray that we would see growth in the church not for numbers but for the expansion of the gospel in our suburbs. Continue to pray that the next generation of leaders passionately pursue a relationship with Jesus, and out of that are moved to love others deeply.

**The Grove**


For revival of our congregants leading to greater frontline impact.

**Toowoomba Community Baptist**

As we start Alpha July 24, we pray that God would make this outreach opportunity an ongoing ministry that develops a culture in the church where we are all the time introducing people to Jesus.

**Victoria Point Baptist**





# DAY 7

## *pray for one another*

Please join us in praying for growth of our Young Adult community! We will commence ALPHA on the 8th of August with the hope that each existing young adult will prayerfully consider one friend to invite and commit to discipling throughout the course. The hope is that harvest is ready! May this be the start of revival amidst the young adults who reside in the Red Hill area!

Windsor Road Baptist Church

