

Graves to Gardens

E A S T E R
U N P L U G G E D



WELCOME

Welcome fellow pilgrims!

We're excited to have you and your crew join us on this interactive Easter journey! Graves to Gardens is designed as a fun and challenging experience to be done as a household or with a small group of friends.

Our hope is that it will bring new levels of meaning and depth to your Easter weekend and that all who wander here will have a fresh and unforgettable encounter with the true story of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. May these practices draw you closer to our Father and give you a greater understanding of the power of His love for us and His plans for the world.

THE APPROACH

We recommend that you (and maybe a few others in your group) read over all of the practices before starting on Friday. It's best for one person to be the designated lead for each day, helping to set the tone and making sure everyone clearly understands the objective. As the organizer, keep in mind that each practice will require some amount of interpretation and contextualization for your crew. For example,

if you have a family with young children you may want to simplify the readings and think of ways to work around sleep times and attention spans. Or if you are the only person in your household doing **#gravestogardens**, consider finding a way to journey alongside some others (virtually or in person). Whatever your situation is, we encourage you to make adjustments to fit your context.

THE PREP

You will also need to do some level of preparation.

For example, if you plan to go outside for the sunrise practice you'll want to scout sunrise viewing angles in advance so you're not scrambling around at 6am looking for a good spot. You'll probably also want to do your homework to find the dawn and sunrise times for your area. And don't forget that you may need to shop in advance for items you'll need such as breakfast foods, candles, matches, etc.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Graves to Gardens is designed to be done as households or in community, so if you happen to be on your own or know of someone who might be doing any of these practices alone, why not invite them to join you via video-chat or better yet, in real life?



PREP LIST

A few things you may need for Graves to Gardens:

- ☐ **Walking shoes & weather appropriate attire**
(for Day 1 gravesite & Day 2 pilgrimage practices)
- ☐ **Candles / tealights**
(at least one per person, plus extra for around the house)
- ☐ **Lighter / matches**
- ☐ **Printed versions of each practice**
(optional digital version available)
- ☐ **Art/Craft Supplies**
(for creative option Saturday)
- ☐ **Books**
(for reading option Saturday)
- ☐ **Simple foods/snacks/meal items**
(for low stress Sabbath day mealtimes)
- ☐ **Bible / Children's story Bible**
(for offline scripture reading)
- ☐ **Printed maps**
(as needed for tech-free wandering)
- ☐ **Outdoor chairs**
- ☐ **Blankets**
(for Sunday morning sunrise if outside)
- ☐ **Hot drinks / cups / thermos**
- ☐ **Breakfast feast items**
- ☐ **Glasses & drink of choice for toasting**



EEN MENSCH VANDER
VROUWEN GEBOREN
CORTE TÏJ LEFENDES
VERVÏT NIET VLEES
ALLEENDICHEDEN

Van der Meer

Van der Meer



DAY 1: THE GRAVE

GOOD FRIDAY | AFTERNOON & DUSK



OVERVIEW

Today we will be exploring Jesus' crucifixion, death, and burial. The emphasis is on laying our plans, disappointments and unfulfilled hopes in the grave with Jesus. During these practices we will explore the spiritual disciplines of empathy, silence, self-examination and simplicity.

Disclaimer: The first practice is designed to challenge our comfort zones and may evoke uncomfortable emotions as we dive into the reality of death and the grave. Before beginning please be mindful of your current emotional capacity and that of those who will be joining you (including children). Alternatively you can begin your journey with Part 2 below.

PRACTICE PART 1: GRAVES (DAYTIME)

REFLECTION | EMPATHY

CONTEXT

Good Friday certainly didn't feel "good" to Jesus or his friends. A long, sleepless night followed by

a “friendly backstabbing”, a public arrest, and a failed court case resulting in immediate execution would be considered a “bad day” by most standards (John 18-19). Today we reflect on the crucifixion and burial of Jesus and we’ll be exploring the uncomfortable yet necessary role of death in the Easter story.

Death isn’t something we like to give much air-time to in our modern culture, yet it is the inevitable culmination of each and every human life. Some deaths feel dignified or even beautiful—the closing paragraph of a long and fulfilling life story. Others feel tragic, unfair or even cruel, and challenge our sense of wellbeing and hope for a more perfect world. Whatever the context, we must grapple with death in order to understand and experience the true power of resurrection.

We will start our Easter weekend by reminding ourselves once again of the reality of the grave and allow this hard truth to prime our hearts to fully embrace the joy of rebirth!

HOW TO

Locate a gravesite, cemetery or place of remembrance near you. It may be a site of incredible significance or a public space with no personal meaning whatsoever. As a group (or on your own) visit this location with a posture of observance, empathy, and reverence.



OBSERVE: Walk around. Observe the nature of “endings”. Read the inscriptions and notice the length of lives lived and the nature of “fair” and unfair deaths. Allow yourself to dwell on notable features and take time to embrace any thoughts or feelings that come to the surface.

DISCUSS/REFLECT: What did you see and how did it make you feel? Why?

Allow your observations to draw out areas of disappointment or grief in your own life; unfulfilled hopes and dreams, unmet expectations, failure, loss or heartbreak. As you move toward the evening practice, invite God to draw your attention to specific instances in your life where hope has been lost, broken, or delayed. Begin to consider what it would mean for you to bury some of these expectations in the grave with Jesus.

PRAY: *Father, our lives are so often shaped by disappointment and grief. We so desperately cling to the outcomes we desire rather than surrendering our demands to you. Teach us to let go of control and trust you completely. Not our will, but yours be done.*

NOTE FOR FAMILIES

As is age-appropriate, invite your kids to explore the gravesites. Point out or read particular markers/sites to them. Ask questions (or allow them to ask you questions) about what they see and feel. Talk to them about how Jesus was crucified and buried



in a grave (tomb) and how His friends (the disciples) really thought it was all over. Explain that this weekend will be about exploring the story of Jesus' death, how sad and disappointed His followers were, and the incredibly amazing thing that happened after that! (Refrain from spoilers. Allow your child/children to experience each day for what it is: the disappointment, the waiting/unknown, and finally the joy.)

PRACTICE PART 2: LIGHTS OUT (EVENING)

SILENCE | STILLNESS | SELF-EXAMINATION

HOW TO

As the sun begins to set, create an atmosphere of simplicity and calm in your living space by lighting candles around your home and turning off all lights, televisions, computers, phones, digital devices, etc. The goal is to set the tone for the evening and prepare your crew for the practice.

When everyone is gathered and ready to start the reading, extinguish all extra candles except for one placed in front of each person (or one shared candle for everyone). Our aim is to come to a point of total darkness by the end of this reflection time so make sure you've pre-read all of the steps.

READ TOGETHER

When you're ready to start, gather your household together (turn off any remaining devices) and invite someone to read the following:

READER: *Good Friday is the traditional observance of Jesus' death on the cross and His burial in the garden tomb. Tonight we are going to explore our own feelings of disappointment and grief through the eyes of the disciples.*

READ TOGETHER: The Crucifixion & Burial of Christ.
Choose from:

[Matthew 27:1-54](#) • [Mark 15:1-40](#)
[Luke 23:1-48](#) • [John 19:1-30](#)

REFLECT: *Let's take a moment to reflect on the experience of the disciples as they watched Jesus, their greatest hope, die right in front of them, buried in a tomb and sealed up with a heavy stone.*

DISCUSS: *How do you imagine the disciples were feeling at this point? How would you feel?*

READER: *They say grief is the price we pay for love, but perhaps it's also the price we pay for having hope. Much like the disciples, we all experience grief when our hopes and desires come crashing down. From the smallest disappointment to the greatest loss, unfulfilled expectations keep us in a state of constant recalibration, searching for a new route to the life*

we imagined we'd have. The unfortunate fact is that the tighter we hold onto these unmet expectations, the longer our grief lasts. As the Hebrew proverb says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Proverbs 13:12).

But here's the big secret of Easter: *In order for any hope to be fulfilled, for any garden to produce a harvest, the seeds must first be buried in the dirt—hidden, dark and alone. Jesus spoke this truth of Himself when He said, "unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." (John 12:24) Every plan, hope, dream, or desire we have will only be able to blossom to its fullest potential if we're willing to bury it in the ground with Jesus and completely let go of control. It is only from this dark and silent grave of surrender that true beauty can spring forth.*

In stillness invite your household/group to respond to the following:

ASK: *Let's ask God to bring to mind any unfulfilled dreams or unmet expectations we've been carrying...*

LISTEN: *We'll take a few minutes of silence to listen together as He brings these things to mind. Consider writing them down or simply hold them in your mind.*

SILENCE: 2-5 minutes (or as needed)

PRAY: *God, these things which are actually beyond our control have so often troubled our hearts. We choose to bury them like seeds in the dirt. We place them in the grave with Christ. We choose to let go of control*



and leave the outcomes in your hands, Father. We trust you and we believe that you will raise these hopes to life again when, if, and how you see fit.

ACT: *Now, as each of us becomes ready to completely let go of these things, we'll **blow out our candle and whisper or reflect Christ's final words on the cross: "It is finished"**.*

STILLNESS: *Once all of the candles are blown out, we will sit silently in the dark and allow ourselves to grieve the release of control over the outcomes (the room should be totally dark at this point).*

Invite God's peace and presence to rush in. Remind your own heart of this truth: On the third day the Son will rise from the grave (Matthew 17:23) with restoration in His wings (Malachi 4:2).

Remain in this symbolic grave of darkness and silence for as long as you are able.

END OPTION 1 - RESOLVE: Close in prayer together, pray for one another, process your experience together, encourage one another.

END OPTION 2 - LINGER: Remain in silence for the remainder of the night. Go to bed in silence. Break silence first thing Saturday morning. Process and pray together as desired.

***Note:** This practice is only half of the story—please continue with the Day 2 & 3 practices to explore peace in the unknown and the hope of resurrection.*





IDOL

OVERVIEW

For today's practice we will be digging into the disciplines of fasting and sabbath rest, and exploring the art of being a "non-anxious presence" in the transitional seasons of our lives. This wilderness practice is designed to be a full-day experience but you are welcome to modify it for your context.

CONTEXT

According to the Jewish calendar Saturday is the last day of the week and is observed as the Sabbath. As you know, Sabbath is the day of the week set aside from the other six to pause all work, to rest, and to reflect on the goodness and provision of God. The foundations for the Sabbath come from the Genesis account of creation in which God crafted the universe in six days and on the seventh day He rested after declaring His handiwork "finished" (Genesis 2:1). But what's even more interesting is that God didn't just create Sabbath for humans, He observed it Himself. What a beautiful image: the God who rests expects us to do the same.

Meanwhile, back in the Easter story, it's the Sabbath. Where do we find Jesus? Resting ("sabbathing") in the grave. This isn't a coincidence and it isn't the

first time we find Jesus having a nap (if you will) in the middle of a generally intense situation. Remember the infamous storm on the Sea of Galilee? The one where Jesus is sleeping in the stern of the boat while the disciples are scared out of their minds (Mark 4:35-41)? Despite the massive responsibility of being “the hope of the world” Jesus somehow manages to live from a posture of sabbath rest even in the midst of crisis; a quality that is rarely seen in our modern, frantic world.

Today, with this in mind, we’ll choose to embrace Sabbath in the hope of becoming what one writer calls a “non-anxious presence”. Like Jesus, we will slow down, lay fear to rest, and allow ourselves to be at ease even within the darkest of graves or the most turbulent of storms. With an abiding trust in the God who makes all things new, we will lean fully into the wilderness of waiting, believing that new life will eventually spring up from the grave of our hopes. Let’s embrace the gift of Sabbath together.

PRACTICE PART 1: TECH BLACKOUT

S A B B A T H | F A S T I N G | P R E S E N C E

HOW TO

As a practical expression of Sabbath, today’s practice is built around a full day fast from the distract-



tions of technology. You are invited to fully unplug from the chaos of our heavily entertained and hyper-connected world and to choose to be present to your surroundings, to those around you, and to the input of your five senses. We recommend the following steps:

- 1. Set a start and end time together:** Ideally that would be a 24 hour period starting Friday at dusk and ending Saturday at dusk, however any amount of time will do (we recommend at least 4 hours for entry level impact). The longer you go, the more you will receive from this practice.
- 2. For best results:** Go dark on all forms of digital entertainment. Turn off all electronic devices, mobile phones, tvs, laptops, gaming systems, etc.
- 3. Turn off your internet router** (unplug or power down).
- 4. Place all mobile devices in a box or basket** and put them somewhere out of sight.
- 5. Emergency Contact:** You may want to let a few people know how to get in touch with you in case of emergency but emphasize that you won't be available for regular communication (see social media option below).



SOCIAL MEDIA

OPTIONAL: Before going “tech-dark” post the “time-out” image. Share about your Easter Sabbath tech-blackout. Invite others to join you as well.

Time-out image available at gravestogardens.com

#gravestogardens



PRACTICE PART 2: SABBATH IDEAS

SCRIPTURE | CREATIVITY | PRESENCE | PILGRIMAGE | HOSPITALITY

1. READ SCRIPTURE

Most of the library of scripture was written to be read out loud in large portions. Gather your household, choose a book of the Bible or a large section of scripture and read it out loud together. Consider taking turns with each chapter and try to avoid discussion until you’ve completed the entire reading (alternately, try reading an entire book of the Bible in one sitting by yourself).



2. GET CREATIVE

Embrace the joy of making, building, drawing, crafting, sculpting, baking, and shaping. Make sure you're doing it from a posture of rest vs. a desire to "accomplish a task".

3. BE HERE NOW

Practice being extra-present where you are. Pause for a few minutes during the day and thank God for your five senses each by name. Be still and take time to observe what you hear, smell, and see. Enjoy the taste of a good meal or the feel of a comfortable blanket, chair or even a bath.

4. PILGRIMAGE

A pilgrimage is a journey with a spiritual purpose. Try going on a walk or hike with the intention of observing the goodness of God wherever you can find it. Breathe in the fresh air, feel the stable ground beneath your feet, notice the unique aspects of flora and fauna wherever you find them. Pause in areas of particular beauty or calm to "bathe" in the serenity and power of God's creation. Thank Him for the gift of nature.

5. BOOK & BLANKET

As a group (or by yourself) spend some time curled up with a good book and a blanket. Consider reading out loud together (Lewis or Tolkein anyone?) or, if

reading independently, come together at some point to share what each of you have read and learned.

6. SIMPLE EATING

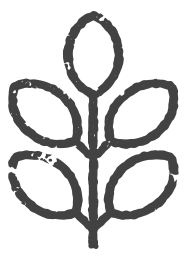
It’s not uncommon to spend a good portion of your normal day preparing or cleaning up after meals. Why not plan some simple and healthy options that don’t require a lot of prep? Fresh cut fruits and vegetables, pre-made meals, finger foods, a simple grazing platter, and/or an arsenal of healthy snacks should help make the day much more restful for everyone.

END NOTES

End your Sabbath day by going outside together and looking at the stars (if you can see them). Reflect on the consistency and magnitude of God’s love and the gift of sabbath rest.

Remind your household about the early wakeup for Easter sunrise.





DAY 3: THE GARDEN

EASTER SUNDAY | MORNING



OVERVIEW

Today we will be doing our third and final practice in two parts and we'll try on the disciplines of celebration and "nature immersion" (the discipline of experiencing God through nature) which will help us explore our part in the ever-expanding Kingdom of God among us.

CONTEXT

God's pre-eminent act of creation in Genesis was literally to breathe His spirit-life (in Hebrew: "ruach") into the first human in the midst of a beautiful garden. It is absolutely no coincidence then that God's first act of new creation was to breathe His spirit-life (in Greek: "pneuma") into the crucified Jesus and raise Him from the grave—in the middle of a garden no less.

In the first garden God gave full responsibility to Adam to be fruitful and multiply and take care of creation but this mandate was quickly lost to the temptation of humanistic pride. Now, in the second garden we have Jesus rising again as Adam 2.0, the literal image of God in human form, and He's inviting all of us to cultivate His new creation. Empow-



ered by the Spirit we are commissioned once again with the words of our Creator echoing in our souls: be fruitful and multiply and fill the Earth with the garden of God’s goodness (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8)!

It is from this place of divine purpose that we re-discover our carefully buried hopes. The seeds we sowed in the grave on Friday will blossom a hundred thousand times more beautifully when they grow up in the eternal soil of the Kingdom of Heaven. What was once finite and destined for decay is now infinite; marked for heaven, stripped of all our brokenness and totally dedicated to God. This is the power of Easter.

PRACTICE PART 1: GARDEN SUNRISE

NATURE – IMMERSION | STILLNESS | PRAYER

HOW TO

This practice is simple. Rise early and find a place (whether near your home or somewhere with an epic view) to watch the sunrise. Below are a few suggestions for this practice:

- Ideally you’ll want to be **awake and in location before dawn** (first light).



- Google: “*dawn time*” (not “sunrise”) for your local area. In New Zealand, for example, the sky starts getting light about 30 minutes before the actual sunrise. This amount of time varies from 20-70 minutes depending on where you are located.
- Consider bringing chairs, blankets, hot drinks and even an acoustic guitar or other instrument (dawn worship time!).

Keep the heart of this practice in mind as you reflect on the resurrected King. A posture of silence and stillness really serves this moment best (possibly followed by musical worship for those so inclined). Feel free to read the following if it seems appropriate:

REFLECT: *Today we acknowledge and celebrate the inauguration of God’s new creation. The Kingdom of Heaven—God’s vision for a flourishing world—is expanding among us, growing into a mountain that covers the whole earth (Daniel 2:35). As we experience the sunrise (the Son rise) let’s take a moment to commit afresh to God’s invitation of new beginnings and to becoming the co-creators we were born to be. God has empowered and equipped each of us with unique gifts, purposes and positions to join Him in cultivating a stunning garden that will fill the whole world. Wherever we set our feet and whatever we touch with our hands should begin to look like heaven on Earth—more beautiful, more whole, and more alive than ever before. Today is a unique moment in the year to remind ourselves of this and to come into alignment once again with God’s exquisite plan to restore the world around us.*



A NOTE ABOUT SUNRISES

For some of us, the sun will rise in a clear sky—sharp, striking, and beautiful. For others, the sunrise will be all but invisible, fading up behind cloudy skies and hidden from sight. Whatever your sunrise experience is, consider the ways in which God’s Kingdom is clearly visible to you sometimes and then in other seasons His goodness and new life feels hidden or maybe even non-existent. When it comes to the sun, we have faith that it rises whether we can see its brilliance directly or not. In the same way, hold on to faith that the kingdom of God is rising—illuminating our world with truth and inviting those in darkness to come to His great light (Matthew 4:16,17), even in the times when you can’t see it.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Share a photo of your sunrise moment on Instagram or on the Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/GravesToGardens>

@gravestogardens #gravestogardens

PRACTICE PART 2: BREAKFAST PARTY

CELEBRATION | BREAKING BREAD | COMMUNITY

HOW TO

Part two of this Easter morning might just be the highlight of the weekend. Breakfast. The brief is simple: prepare a breakfast feast, break bread and raise a toast to the risen King and His endless kingdom and then eat together as a household.

While most of the spiritual disciplines tend to be things we find difficult or challenging, celebration can feel like an anomaly as it's something we actually enjoy doing. In this case, the real challenge of celebration is to do it with purpose and intention, to choose to celebrate the things that God values. This morning, we will funnel our focus and intentions into the resurrection of Jesus, the coming of the kingdom and the ways in which we are invited to bring heaven to Earth.

THE STEPS

- 1. Cook:** Prepare the breakfast feast together. Make sure everyone gets to participate in the cooking, baking, chopping, serving, etc. This is a valuable act of co-creation.

- 2. Decorate:** (optional) Set the table and decorate like you would for a party. This is Easter. Let's celebrate.
- 3. Sit:** Invite your household to sit down at the table.
- 4. Drinks:** Pour glasses of whatever you're drinking and prepare to give toasts (yes, the "cheers" kind of toast).
- 5. Toast:** Invite each member to make a toast to the Risen Son.
PROMPT: *What resonates most for you about the Easter story?*
- 6. Pray:** End the toasts with a short prayer and invite your crew to say the *Lord's Prayer* together.
- 7. EAT!**
- 8. Nap!** (Or join an Easter event... and then nap.)

THE END

Thank you for joining us (and thousands of others around the world) for Graves to Gardens this year! We pray that this journey has been deeply meaningful for you and your crew and that God met you with renewed hope, restored joy, and a refreshed sense of your place in our Father's growing Kingdom! Happy Easter!

Love and Blessings,
The Prayer Collective Team, Christchurch New Zealand