

ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

# SEEK

ANNUAL CHURCH FAST


DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

JANUARY 11 - FEBRUARY 19

301 S. ALFRED STREET  
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314



*Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley*  
Senior Pastor



**BEHOLD, I WILL DO A NEW  
THING, NOW IT SHALL  
SPRING FORTH; SHALL  
YOU NOT KNOW IT? I WILL  
EVEN MAKE A ROAD IN  
THE WILDERNESS AND  
RIVERS IN THE DESERT.**

**- ISAIAH 43:19**

# DEAR COVENANT PARTNER,

Grace and peace be unto you in the name of our Lord Jesus, who is our resurrected, risen, reigning, and returning Redeemer. Can you believe, it is already that time of year again? Once again, we pause as a collective church family to seek the face of God, through our SEEK fast. Whether this is your first time fasting or if fasting is frequently a part of your spiritual discipline, I pray this fast would be a significant milestone in your spiritual journey. As always, we will be focusing on three areas of our lives—the physical, the social/technological and the financial. We believe that by disciplining ourselves in these areas of our lives, we will be able to truly carve out some intentional time to spend with God!



Our theme for SEEK 2023 is “New Beginnings.” Over the course of 40 days, we are seeking God, drawing closer in relationship, and receiving clarity and understanding for what the Lord desires to speak in our individual and collective lives. Daily we will gather for 6:00am prayer to bring focus to our day, followed by independent meditation through our Seek devotional and prayer journal. While fasting, please keep in mind that this journal is created so that you can track your progress throughout your fast while capturing your daily experiences with God.

As we emerge from an unimaginable pandemic, it is our prayer that SEEK 2023 will serve as the spiritual catalyst to prepare us to accept the assignment of a God who constantly is calling us to “new things.” I am delighted you have accepted the invitation to “seek.” I fully believe your participation in SEEK 2023 is not only for you, but also for our entire church community. I encourage you to embark on this challenge with that in mind. If you are new to Alfred Street, or to SEEK, we welcome you. We have a saying here, “Amazing things happen when you say YES to God.” We cannot wait to hear of the many testimonies that will be birthed through SEEK 2023! Let’s pray together!

*SELAH,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Howard-John Wesley'.

Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley, Senior Pastor

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# FASTING

## FAST OPTIONS

Please choose at least one option from each category as your action items for the duration of the fast.

### FOOD

**Week One:** Eliminate sugar, caffeine, meat; commit to daily exercise/movement

**Week Two:** Eliminate sugar, caffeine, meat; commit to daily exercise/movement

**Week Three:** Daniel Fast; commit to daily exercise/movement

**Week Four:** Daniel Fast; commit to daily exercise/movement

**Week Five:** Water intensity or clear liquids and juice 6A-6P; commit to daily exercise/movement

(As with any fast, please consult your doctor before making modifications to your diet or exercise program.)

### SOCIAL & ENTERTAINMENT

**Week One:** Social media sign off; incorporate daily centering prayer.

**Week Two:** Social media sign off; incorporate daily centering prayer.

**Week Three:** SM Sign Off + Unnecessary Conversations (phone, text, gossip); incorporate daily centering prayer.

**Week Four:** SM Sign Off + Unnecessary Conversations (phone, text, gossip); incorporate daily centering prayer.

**Week Five:** All of the Above + Limited Entertainment (TV, Movies, Sports) + incorporate daily an hour of silence; incorporate daily centering prayer.

### FINANCIAL

**Week One:** Eliminate discretionary expenses including online purchases + journal the ways to have a healthier relationship with money based on this week's sacrifice.

**Week Two:** Eliminate discretionary expenses including online purchases + journal the ways to have a healthier relationship with money based on this week's sacrifice.

**Week Three:** Curtail Discretionary Expenses + Online Purchases + External Dining + Journal the ways to have a healthier relationship with money based on this week's sacrifice.

**Week Four:** Curtail Discretionary Expenses + Online Purchases + External Dining + Journal the ways to have a healthier relationship with money based on this week's sacrifice.

**Week Five:** Essential purchases only. Journal the ways to have a healthier relationship with money based on this week's sacrifice.

## WHAT IS FASTING?

As you prepare to embark on Seek 2023, you may be shocked to find out that scripture does not require Christians to fast. You might ask yourself, if scripture doesn't require us to fast then why should we? While scripture does not require Christians to fast, scripture does reveal the importance of fasting. In the Old Testament, fasts were frequently called forth by leaders of a congregation during critical and despairing times (Jeremiah 26:9, Joel 1:14, Daniel 1:8). In the New Testament, Jesus' earthly ministry is preceded by 40 days of prayer and fasting (Matthew 4). Likewise, in the early church, Christians would couple prayer and

fasting as a means to hear from God, especially before making important decisions (Acts 13:2; 14:23). Fasting is an opportunity for Christians to practice the fruit of self-discipline, by abstaining from personal pleasure and fixing their entire attention on God. Although many people will choose to abstain from food during their fast, food is not the only means of fasting. Believers can choose to abstain from anything that can potentially serve as a distraction in their pursuit of seeking God.

## HOW TO FAST?

Before embarking on a fast, participants should prepare themselves mentally, physically, and spiritually. Keep in mind that fasting is not a form of dieting and all participants should consult their primary care



physicians before making any changes to their diet. We also suggest preparing your meals in advance in order to maximize and focus your time and energy. Remember, the objective of fasting is not only to eliminate things from your daily routine, but also to replace them with prayer. If you usually eat breakfast at a certain time during the day, replace that time by spending time in prayer. If you normally watch TV when you get home from work, consider replacing that time with reading the word of God. As you fast, it is important to be consistent. However, if you break your fast by accident or even miss a few days, don't beat yourself up or give up. Rather, get right back to your fasting objectives. Remember, the objective isn't to be perfect, the objective is to be transformed.

## WHAT IS THE DANIEL FAST?

The Daniel Fast is a spiritual fast based on two biblical accounts of the Prophet Daniel (Daniel 1:15–16, Daniel 10:2–3). In the first biblical account, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, underwent a 10-day “fast” in order not to defile themselves with the King's choice meats that went against their dietary restrictions. Instead, they ate vegetables and drank water. At the end of the ten days, they looked healthier and more fit than the other men who ate from the King's choice foods. In the second biblical account, the Prophet Daniel underwent 21 days of fasting in order to receive an interpretation for a vision he received. Daniel refrained from eating meat and drinking wine. As a result, at the conclusion of his 21 days of fasting, he received a message from an angel that interested his vision. In both biblical accounts, Daniel underwent a fast in order to hear and remain true to his God. The purpose of the Daniel Fast is not to mimic Daniel, but rather to seek and focus on God. In reality, today's food industry is much different, than that of Daniel's time. However, changing our habits and leaving our comfort foods and zones, we allow ourselves to place our entire attention and dependency on God.

## FOODS TO EAT ON THE DANIEL FAST

- All fruit – fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, or canned.
- All vegetables – fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, or canned.

- All whole grains – amaranth, barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa, millet, and whole wheat.
- All nuts & seeds – almonds, cashews, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, and sunflower seeds; unsweetened almond milk. Nut butters are also included.
- All legumes – canned or dried; black beans, black-eyed peas, cannellini beans, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), great northern beans, kidney beans, lentils, pinto beans, and split peas.
- All quality oils – avocado, coconut, grapeseed, olive, peanut, sesame, and walnut.
- Beverages – distilled water, filtered water, spring water, fresh fruit or vegetable juices.
- Other – unsweetened almond milk, coconut milk, rice milk, or soy milk; herbs, spices, salt, pepper, unsweetened coconut flakes, seasonings, Bragg's Liquid Aminos, soy products, and tofu.

## FOODS TO AVOID ON THE DANIEL FAST

- All meat & animal products – bacon, beef, buffalo, eggs, fish, lamb, poultry, and pork.
- All dairy products – butter, cheese, cream, milk, and yogurt.
- All sweeteners – agave nectar, artificial sweeteners, brown rice syrup, cane juice, honey, molasses, raw sugar, syrups, and sugar.
- All leavened bread & yeast – baked goods and Ezekiel bread (if it contains yeast and honey).
- All refined & processed food products – artificial flavorings, chemicals, food additives, preservatives, white flour, and white rice.
- All deep-fried foods – corn chips, French fries, and potato chips.
- All solid fats – lard, margarine, and shortening.
- Beverages – alcohol, carbonated drinks, coffee, energy drinks, herbal tea, and tea.

– by Kristen Feola, “Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast”

# DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

Which version of the fast are you participating in? Write out each commitment!

Physical:

Social:

Financial:

What steps will you take to assist you in meeting your goals? Complete as needed.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

What are your prayer requests for SEEK 2023? Complete as needed.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

# DAY 1

“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold.”

– Proverbs 22:1

## NEW LEGACY: A GOOD NAME

This past year I turned 50 and as a church we celebrated our 219th anniversary. At 50, my mind really began focusing on the word legacy. Anyone over 50 should be thinking about what has been inherited and what is going to be left behind. It is no secret that the greatest joys of my life are first my boys and then the awesome responsibility of serving as pastor of Alfred Street Baptist Church.

As a father, I thank God for Deuce and Cooper not only through the ministry of presence but by serving as a good steward of the Wesley name. Growing up, my father, my grandfather, and his father before him, ensured that the name Wesley meant something. Through the grace of God, I endeavor to leave that same legacy for my boys.

As a pastor, I strive to protect the worship and witness of ASBC by loving God’s people. For me, legacy means caring for the least of these, giving back to the community, grooming and guiding sons and daughters in ministry, making disciples to win the world for Christ, and by always living and leading in ways that make glorious the name of Jesus.

Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

*What does legacy mean to you?*

## PRAYER

Lord, thank you for blessing us with your grace and mercy and by modeling that a good name is a legacy worth striving for. Amen.





# DAY 2

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

– Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

## NEW HEARTSET: WHEN LIFE CALLS

If you are thinking that the word HEARTSET sounds like mindset, you are right. Like mindset, heartset draws us into a posture of focus and consideration. It calls us to consider the attitude, disposition and mood of our heart while challenging us to check the quality of our heart's outflow. It is a well-guarded heart that helps us successfully navigate life despite stressors, disease and demands. You know, those undesired, draining and dictating situations always screaming for our attention (but might not be really ready for the response) depending on the condition of our heart?

Our guiding scripture reminds us that everything we do flows from it (the heart). This means, how we show up when life calls. And as we know, life is always calling! When it calls do we lack grace? Are we quick to anger, have rapid-fire speech and colorful language? Are we stressed, depressed, unforgiving, short-tempered, unkind, impatient, disregarding and disrespectful? Does our outflow operate without Christ?

We are strongly encouraged in the verse to pay close attention to our heart above everything else. This means proactively checking the intention of our heart and engaging God for direction to protect, maintain and nourish it. HEARTSET may seem like a new word, but it is certainly not a new action. Let us in this season SEEK an authentic heartset that is outwardly evident of Christ within us.

Rev. Dr. LaTasha Morgan, LPC

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

*If you resonate, reflect and consider, what heartset shifts are necessary for your life.*

## PRAYER

God, please speak to my heart and create in me an authentic place that is free from an unhealthy heartset.



# DAY 3

“In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus.”

– Philippians 2:5 (NCV)

## NEW MINDSET: A NEW ATTITUDE

“In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus.

Christ himself was like God in everything. But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be used for his own benefit. But he gave up his place with God and made himself nothing. He was born as a man and became like a servant. And when he was living as a man, he humbled himself and was fully obedient to God, even when that caused his death—death on a cross.”

If you are anything like me, you have found yourself in a situation that required change. This change demanded a new perspective — a realignment, a recalibration, or possibly a new mindset. Maybe it was a family or relationship issue; a work or career challenge; a fitness or medical hurdle; or a personal objective that required you to have a new attitude.

Life can place us at crossroads, whether organic or forced. Many begin every new year asking, “What do I want to achieve this year?” Resolutions and goals abound. Yet, today’s text reveals a key: having a Christ-like mindset.

If we want to achieve great things in this new season, I echo the advice of Patti LaBelle let’s “tidy up our point of view and get a new attitude!” A Christ-like attitude.

Rev. Dr. Joy Slaughter

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What can you change about your attitude to reach your goals, hopes, or objectives? What can you glean from Christ’s example above?

## PRAYER

Lord, help me to be humble. To offer my everything to you. Reveal the change you desire in my attitude and align me with your purpose; so, the goals I achieve, the hopes I have, and all of my objectives reflect Christ! Amen.

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# DAY 4

*“For I know the plans I have for you says the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

— Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

## NEW CLARITY: A CLEAR PLAN

Clarity is defined as the quality of being coherent and intelligible. Now, if you’ve ever had a conversation with God, sometimes the coherent and intelligible are not the exact words you would use to describe that experience after talking with Him. In an effort to be clearer about His will, we ask, “God, what is it that you want me to do? Just tell me and make it plain.” Clarity is something that each of us seek at times in our lives and then we wait... we wait hoping to hear God confirm the very thing we want to do instead of the thing we KNOW He has called us to do. But Jeremiah 29:11 states, “For I know the plans I have for you says the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” It’s all right there and it’s crystal clear. You don’t have to know the plan when you are aligned with and have faith in The Plan Maker. God knows the plan and that alone is enough for us to trust, especially when we don’t understand. The plan will prosper us. The plan won’t harm us. The plan gives us hope. The plan will give us a future. So, the next time you talk with God, trust His clear plan and allow Him to direct you.

Gerald Holden

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

With new clarity, what is the plan God needs you to accept? Get with the plan!

## PRAYER

God, remind us that your plan is clear and that it will prosper us, won’t hurt us, and will give us a hope and a future.





# DAY 5

“For the word of God is alive and active...”

– Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)

## NEW DISCERNMENT: HE WILL HELP US FIGURE IT OUT

READ: Hebrews 4:8-12 (NIV)

Stepping out on faith is terrifying. But when it's regarding something new, the terror can be tenfold. Do you remember when you moved to a new area? How about when you made new friends? What did it feel like at a new school, after a new promotion, or finding new love for the umpteenth time? Terror. Tenfold.

Sometimes, the fear lies in our confession that we don't know what we don't know. Very little exposes not knowing more than embarking into new territory. In newness, we share a common experience... fear.

It's easy for fear to exist if we lean on our own understanding. If success is tied to what we know, then it makes sense that fear would rule. Because once again, we don't know what we don't know. How can we reason our way through something we've never experienced?

It's important at this point that we don't forget we've been called to Christ. And through him, our connection to God is strengthened. Through prayer, meditation, and worship God interacts with us. God aids us in life planning, choosing schools, finding love, and so much more.

We have an active God who meets us where we are, holds our hand, and helps us figure out this messy thing called life.

Minister Rasheem Rooke

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What can I do to open the line of communication between God and me?

## PRAYER

Lord, help me hear you more than my fears.

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# DAY 6

“No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgement You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their righteousness is from Me,” says the LORD.”

— Isaiah 54:17 (NKJV)

## NEW AVAILABILITY: NO WEAPON FORMED AGAINST YOU SHALL PROSPER

The context of Isaiah 54 describes the anticipation of the new covenant promises and future blessings for Israel. One of the highlights is Prophet Isaiah delivering God’s message to the people of Jerusalem after its destruction and pending restoration saying, “No weapon formed against you shall prosper.” God made the promise that no enemy would be able to take a weapon and effectively succeed in using it against Israel. The Hebrew meaning of “prosper” is to succeed, advance and be profitable.

The key verse is one widely used by believers in cases of personal defense, when under attack and in times of trouble. We recite it loud and proud, “No weapon formed against me shall prosper!” However, at times, we as believers are the ones mimicking a “weapon” by using hurtful words and harmful behavior, and as a consequence, we shall not prosper and we block our own blessings. In other words, we become like and we serve like the “weapon.” Give consideration to the new year, to a new you — weapon-free, with anticipation of the favor of our gracious God answering your prayers and delivering unto you a great measure of success.

Anita Banks, MIT

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Have you noticed any patterns of Satan’s attempts to create weapons in your life?  
How do you maintain a healthy balance of your mental, physical and spiritual state?

## PRAYER

Dear heavenly father, help me model the love of Christ Jesus in my daily living. Help me become gentle and giving, compassionate and forgiving. I place my full trust and dependence on you. In the name of Jesus. Amen.



# DAY 7

“Three things will last forever — faith, hope, and love — and the greatest of these is love.”

— 1 Corinthians 13:13 (NLT)

## NEW RECONCILIATION: INTERNAL RECONCILIATION

Too often we overprocess and overthink events and experiences which take place in our lives. We are human, and we are fallible. We will make mistakes and we will have and cause hurt feelings. Yet there is hope and a place for reconciliation. The Gospel really is not that deep. It simply always calls us to a place of love. The most common path to reconciliation is forgiveness and love. Once you have honestly prayed about the situation, love is the first movement towards reconciliation. Love and forgive yourself. We cannot forgive ourselves if we do not love ourselves enough to think we are worthy of forgiveness. We must explore the beauty, fulfillment, the purity of loyalty of an inward love, in order to forgive. Reconcile anew inwardly with the same love and forgiveness we are called to activate for others. Take the time to appreciate an internal reconciliation full of the splendor of love.

Rev. Laura O.White

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

*How pure and honest is the love I have for myself?*

## PRAYER

*My loving God, grant me the gift of internal love.*





# DAY 8

“Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?”

— Jeremiah 8:22 (NIV)

## NEW HEALING: MEDICINE FOR THE SOUL

Many great gospel songs have been composed from this very scripture. They talk about a balm, which was a combination of herbs given to the people by a medicine man during the days of Jeremiah. The question, “is there a balm in Gilead?” is still valid today in our modern-day culture. Every day we deal with sickness, death and despair that leave us feeling like the people in the days of Jeremiah. Some even wonder if they are being punished or if God has abandoned them, and in turn, we look for some medicine to address our issues. Yet, if you look around, we can see there is a healing, there is a medicine, there is one able to be the balm we need. The power is when we take the medicine as prescribed — each day, in every response, through prayer and meditation. The Holy Spirit reminds us that God is ever present, and His healing power is always available. God continues to keep us, in the valley of our despairs, in the midst of our illnesses, and even at our most difficult hour.

So yes, we can declare, there is a balm in Gilead! By the power of Jesus Christ and in His name, there is power to heal the wounded.

Rev. Dr. Sedric Roberts

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

*Have you encountered Christ's healing power? Did you share your testimony?*

## PRAYER

Dear God, increase our faith and trust in your ability and healing power, even in the midst of all these difficult times. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.



# DAY 9

“Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.”

— James 1:2-4 (NLT)

## NEW GRATITUDE: THE SCRIPTURE THAT CHANGED MY STORY

I was living out the, “when it rains, it pours” chapter of my life two years ago. Days consisted of tears, anguish, feelings of hopelessness, and so on. In the middle of one of my “woe is me” monologues, a dear friend interrupted me and read James 1: 2-4. I was left speechless and very confused. Why in the world would I find joy in any of this? Better question, how? I read that scripture every day, sometimes several times a day, prayed over it, and even wrote about it. “God, I find no joy in this, but I pray one day that I will.” My story began to shift page by page, and a plot twist was introduced. I conceded that God is the author of my story, and He was carefully weaving together an intricate chapter for my good. Months later and still today, I am most grateful for that chapter. The new plots, new characters introduced, and the new settings in my story could have never been written if that “when it rains, it pours” chapter had never been written.

Now, when I’m experiencing the chapters that are scary, unpredictable, stressful, and even hurtful,, I can now view these stories through the lens of New Gratitude. New Gratitude is the soul’s illumination, the heart’s jubilation, and faith’s endurance. New Gratitude is the never-ending story of God’s promises and love. And sometimes, we have to have complicated and messy chapters written to experience New Gratitude.

Tiffany Diggs

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Where in your life can you find new gratitude, new joy, new understanding?

## PRAYER

May I be continually reminded, when memory escapes me, that even though going through trials and tribulations that seem unbearable, God’s story is perfect.



# DAY 10

“Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: ‘I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.’”

— Isaiah 42: 5-7 (ESV)

## NEW INSPIRATION

Did you know the word inspire is drawn from the Latin *inspirare*, meaning to “blow into or breathe upon”? The Prophet Isaiah reminds us that God breathes upon us and inspires us to be both light and liberators. With each breath we take, we receive new inspiration, new ability to accomplish our God-given purpose. Today, your smile can be the light to brighten someone’s day. Your kind words can liberate someone from feeling discouraged, just because God loves you enough to breathe into you new power each and every day.

Rev. Dr. Zina Jacque

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Will you believe God? Will you breathe in God and then be a blessing wherever you go today?

## PRAYER

Gracious God, inspire me anew. Breathe into me your precious Holy Spirit, and I will move into the world sign and symbol of your light and love. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.





# DAY 11

“Elisha prayed, ‘Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.’ Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”

– 2 Kings 6:17 (NIV)

## NEW REVELATION: OPEN MY EYES, LORD, SO I MAY SEE

Expanded Scripture: 2 Kings 6:15-17 (NIV)

I have often been like Elisha’s servant in times of distress. I’ve been tempted to look at my problems and cry out, “Oh, no, what am I going to do?” Yet today’s passage demonstrates that when we shift our focus from the greatness of our problems to the greatness of our God, we are able to respond with faith instead of fear. Look at Elisha’s and his servant’s drastically different reactions to the same situation. While the servant cries out helplessly, Elisha confesses God’s power. This is because the servant is focused on the great enemy army surrounding them and Elisha is focused on the much greater army of God protecting them. Indeed, when God opens the servant’s eyes “so that he may see,” it is clear that the God who is for them is much greater than the enemy that is against them. In the same way, I pray that God will open our eyes to see Him powerfully at work in the midst of our trials. I pray that He will help us shift from a perspective of fear of our problems to a perspective of faith in our God.

Minister Andrea Pippins

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What are some things you are feeling worried or fearful about? How can you change your focus from the problem and your limitations to God’s presence and His power?

## PRAYER

Lord, open my eyes, so I may see. In your name, Amen.



# DAY 12

“...that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.  
And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”

— John 1:1-3,4 (NKJV)

## NEW FELLOWSHIP

Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God here on earth, and established the steps to reveal the kingdom. One important step is fellowship, which invites an intimate relationship with God, Jesus, and believers promised by the Gospel. The Greek word for “fellowship” is *koinonia* meaning fellowship, communion and sharing.

We are gifts of God who are valuable to the body of Christ. In community, we have the opportunity to share and receive the love of God, acknowledgement, encouragement and empowerment.

Juanita Mills, MIT

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What are the things that we allow to hinder us from experiencing true fulfillment in fellowship with God and others?

Can we seek to make room to experience that fullness of joy the writer promises? Let us agree to start today, as we embark upon the new God has for us.

## PRAYER

Dear God, we give you thanks for the gift of Jesus and salvation. What a beautiful relationship we have with you. Thank you for the many opportunities you provide for us to thrive in community. We lean into fellowship with you, as we seek community with others to experience the joy of your kingdom on earth. Amen.



# DAY 13

“And He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well. . .”

— Mark 5:34

## NEW WELLNESS: I AM WELL

I truly believe the premium has risen for those individuals who genuinely ask you, “How are you doing?” When I was younger, I took for it granted, but as I have grown older there have been numerous times where I have only wanted to feel as if someone cared. The response to this question is typically met with, “I’m fine.” I have changed my response, when its genuine, to “I’m Well.”

There is an unnamed woman in Mark 5. The only insight the text gives into her is regarding a condition she had been battling for 12 years. It involved a discharge of blood rendering her unclean. She pushes through a crowd and touches Jesus. This touch prompts Jesus to stop and ask, “Who touched me?” In fear, she identifies herself and Jesus utters something interesting, “Your faith has made you well.” Well? The word in the Greek is: “sozo.” It has a very wide semantic range. I believe Mark does this intentionally to demonstrate that this woman experiences a wholistic wellness as a result of touching Jesus. She is whole now. Physically, spiritually, socially and emotionally. Everything has been restored. This woman is “well.” Are you well? There is a wholeness that is accessible to you, but only through the right relationship with a Jesus that stops and questions, “Who touched me?” Will you touch Jesus today? Wholeness is at stake.

Rev. Robert “TY” Jones

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Can you honestly say that you are well? What may be some things/relationships that are robbing you of wellness?

What practical steps and habits are you participating in to ensure your wellness?

## PRAYER

Father, in today’s world, we have so much clamoring for our attention and priority. May we be ever mindful of the wholeness that is found in you. In You, we find completion. My prayer today is that I can honestly respond back, “I’m well.”



# DAY 14

*“It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.”*

– Lamentations 3:22 (KJV)

## NEW MERCY: MERCY FOR TODAY

Like some of you, I try to structure my days in a way that creates balance. I want to know that I’ve prioritized my action items, checked in on my parents, called my siblings, followed up with my friends, and have been a good mother to my children. And if I am successful, I can manage to eat a meal, preferably lunch.

But more and more, my to-do list begins to feel like a today list and I am left feeling overwhelmed by the sense of urgency of all of the things vying for my attention. What I am learning is that while a checklist may help manage action items, daily devotion truly anchors the day. When I give God the start of my day, and seek him in the middle of my day, and thank him at the end of my day, I can face the insurmountable, ever-growing demands of my day. I can be gentle with myself and show myself some grace. I can be reminded that every day is a new day to experience new mercies and not be consumed by the pressures of life, because I can cast my cares upon God who cares for me and whose compassions never fail.

Melissa “MEL” Krothe

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

*In what ways has God shown you mercy?*

## PRAYER

Lord, remind me that your mercy is like morning, new every day. Help me to daily anchor my day in you so that I may be strengthened by your compassion and not overwhelmed by a checklist. Amen.





# DAY 15

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

— Romans 12:2 (NIV)

## MAKE ME OVER AGAIN: A FRESH NEW START

This year, I experienced an overwhelming number of challenges. So in true millennial fashion, when I heard God say, “Move,” I considered packing up and moving to Texas or Florida for a new start. I quickly discerned that changing my address wouldn’t change my circumstances, it would change only where I chose to deal with them.

We often search for a new start in the form of a change of scenery, a new job, a new relationship, etc., in hopes of transforming our lives. While all of those things may temporarily ease our discomfort, true transformation starts from within. We can attempt to control external factors, but if we neglect tending to the internal matters of the spirit, the challenges of life will overwhelm us wherever we go.

There will be some seasons in which you run and others in which you walk. The key is to keep moving. The word renewing is defined as resuming an activity after an interruption.

With God, you don’t have to go back to the start line to finish your race.

Ebony Taylor, MIT

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What action is God calling you to resume in the renewing of your mind, body, and spirit in this season?

## PRAYER

Lord, thank you for meeting me where I am. Renew a fresh, steadfast spirit in me so that I may be made new again, right here, right now.



# DAY 16

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

— Romans 8:35; 37(NIV)

## NEW OPTIMISM: NEW RE-SOUL-UTION

At the start of each year, we talk about the need to establish new goals within our lives. We often wrap these “new year resolutions” around our individual issues, like getting promoted or going to the gym more frequently. We even ask God to bless us with opportunities that coincide with these resolutions. But what we are missing by solely focusing on our individual progress is the opportunity to grow more committed to the love of God.

Paul asks, who shall separate us from the love of Christ – trouble or hardship? No, nothing in all creation has the power to separate us because in all things we are more than conquerors through our Lord. Christ’s love increases in us! Therefore, if nothing else can separate us, could the greatest obstacle to strengthening our relationship with Christ be the individual within each of us? Only we can separate ourselves from Christ’s love.

Ray Crawford, MIT

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Do my individual wants align with God’s will?

## PRAYER

Dear God, in this new year let us first seek to fortify our relationship with Christ by committing to lessen the spirit of our individual wants and needs and submitting to Christ’s direction as provided to us by the Holy Spirit. We make this prayer as our re-SOUL-ution in your son’s holy name, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



# DAY 17

“Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask  
or imagine by his power at work within us.”

— Ephesians 3:20

## NEW IMAGINATION

The New American Heritage Dictionary defines imagination as the ability of the mind to create something that is not present or real. That description reminds me of Hebrews 11:1, describing faith as the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Faith is born out of our imagination. It's the way we make the leap from where we are to what God has promised. When we cannot see it, we imagine it. Many of us lose our ability to imagine wildly over time. We become practical and pragmatic, or we've been disappointed so often that we only hope for what we believe, in our limited capacity, is attainable. Perhaps that is why Jesus encouraged us to have the faith of a child, one unsullied by our reasoning and/or disappointments.

If we were to change only one habit, perhaps it should be to imagine more. Oh, for a faith that is fueled by an overactive imagination. Think today about where you are and where you hope to be. Now imagine yourself there. Dream beyond your, “what you think is possible.” This is the kindling for the fire of our faith. Let's see what God will do with our unbridled imagination.

Rev. Dr. Judy Fentress-Williams

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What would change if we lived as though God could truly do more than we could ask or even imagine?

## PRAYER

God, expand my imagination so I can live into your glorious will for my life.

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# DAY 18

“...I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.”

– John 10:10 (NIV)

## NEW LIFE

I am grateful God preserved my life. Having experienced the darkest chapter, every day felt like another dimension of the same reality. No part of life had been untouched: Joy stolen, anxiety induced, everything under attack. Each heartbeat of each new day brought the sensation of teaming horses stomping in ironclad hooves across my chest. Every ping and text paralyzed me as the enemy's plot grounded me underfoot. What was worse, I couldn't break free from the suffering. With no victory in view, I fought against God's deliverance because in my heart it felt like defeat. "Give this enemy victory? Nah, I'm built differently," was my thought as I personified my seeming invincibility while God patiently waited for me to surrender the completed mission. Have you ever begged like the Children of Israel for a one-way return to Egypt rather than pursue the promise? Indeed, that was me.

I felt these things, until one night the Lord whispered, "New Life!" In the depths, I experienced Howard Thurman's "luminous darkness" up close, to see a Savior able to navigate night. Each whisper was the invitation to let go of what passed, in acceptance of the present: A new life? C'mon Jesus, this one may not be perfect, but it's workable! New life?! We worked too hard to start over from scratch! New Life? Where's the security in being recklessly vulnerable to trust God with EVERYTHING?

Yes, new life! The joy and peace of living a God-shaped reality. I became free when I accepted God's destiny: A new life!

Rev. Dr. Dustin B. Sullivan

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What is the reality God is calling you to confront?

## PRAYER

"Lord, I trust you." In Jesus' Name, amen.





# DAY 19

“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.”

— Genesis 1:2-3 (KJV)

## NEW YES: THE MOVEMENT OF GOD

Newton’s third law of motion states that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Do you realize that this same principle applies in our spiritual lives?

Genesis 1:2-3 illustrates that when God’s spirit moved over the waters, something new happened. God spoke, allowing His will to take physical form. In darkness, light appeared. Whatever God’s breath touched became good.

If God’s presence and Word can shift the earth and everything in it, then surely, He can do the same in our lives. As we continue Seek 2023, tell God what you and your loved ones need. Read and listen to His word — with your eyes, ears, and heart. Pray and ask God to accomplish His perfect will. Then when God speaks, allow Him to change the situation as He sees fit.

Whether it’s about our (or someone else’s) health, job, grades, money, relationships, or something else, our prayers create space for God to move and birth something new.

Jamica Littles, MIT

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Is there an area in which you need God to move today?

## PRAYER

May God move in a miraculous way, working everything together for our good and allowing us to experience His awesome presence and power.



# DAY 20

“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”

– Isaiah 43:19 (NRSV)

## NEW PURPOSE: WELCOME YOUR NEW PURPOSE

Read: Isaiah 43:18–21 (NRSV)

The traditional, the old and the familiar things in life are like a shoe that is well worn. We feel comfortable because these shoes have accommodated our feet and all their imperfections. Subsequently, new purposes in our lives are like brand new shoes, not necessarily molded to the contour of our feet. Just as when we try on new shoes for the first time and experience a little non-conforming rigidity, when we face a new purpose, we tend to prefer the comfort of the old, familiar purpose.

Throughout my teaching career, I have taught students at the secondary and post-secondary levels. When I embraced my call to ministry, my assignment has been with elementary students. Initially, I rejected my new purpose. It was not until I perceived that it was God’s call to me and not mine to me that I surrendered to God’s “new purpose,” in my life.

Rev. Marla C. Hawkins

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

*Are you sensing a call to a new purpose in your life? Let go and let God do this new thing. Know that God is faithful and will equip you for your new purpose. Welcome your new purpose today!*

## PRAYER

Lord, God, you are all wisdom, knowledge and understanding. I embrace your new purpose for me. Enable me to perceive your purpose, while you receive my desire to do your will. Amen.



# DAY 21

*“They will still bear fruit in old age; they will stay fresh and green.”*

— Psalm 92:14 (NIV)

## NEW ASSIGNMENT

*“The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age; they will stay fresh and green.”*

— Psalm 92: 12-14, NIV

The invitation to join the Alfred Street Baptist Church staff arrived less than six months after my beloved husband's death. After praying, at the age of almost 65, I made the decision to sell my home, leave a 15-year pastorate, move across country, and begin a new assignment. There were people in my life who told me I was crazy. I was supposed to be planning my retirement, not taking on an assignment as monumental as the Villages of Alfred Street. I must confess, their questions made me wonder if I was making the right decision.

Thankfully, the voice of the Lord spoke through the Rev. Dr. Abraham Smith. He reminded me that my times are in God's hands (Ps 31:15) and that there is no age, stage in life, or position that precludes us from serving when God calls. This was true for me and, my siblings in Christ, it is true for you.

Rev. Dr. Zina Jacque

## PRAYER

Prayer answering God, release this beloved soul to accept what you have placed before them with joy and expectation.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



# DAY 22

“I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.”

– Job 42:2 (NIV)

## NEW REVELATION

“Then Job replied to the Lord: I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted. You asked, ‘who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?’ Surely, I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. ‘You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak: I will question you, and you shall answer me.’ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

– Job 42:1-6 (NIV)

Throughout the Book of Job, Job struggles to understand how could God allow so many horrific things happen to him. Finally, in Chapter 42, Job has a new revelation about God. Job now understands how wrong he has been, and it is God who is in control. So many times, we, like Job, question God’s sovereignty. The world is out of control and our lives don’t make sense. We use what we can’t understand as an excuse for our lack of trust in God. Pray for God’s revelation to open the eyes of your heart that you may abide in His word and will.

Rev. Dr. Sylvia Dayton-Jones

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Are you ready to seek God’s new revelation for your life in 2023?

## PRAYER

Dear God, I know that you can do all things and nothing that you plan is impossible. Help me to take to heart all the truths that are contained in your word and help me to apply it in my life. Thank you, in Jesus’ name, Amen.





# DAY 23

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another;  
even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”*

— John 13:34 (NRSV)

## NEW CONNECTION: THE NEW CONNECTION OF ‘ONE ANOTHERING’

God has given a new commandment to “love one another.” Not just to love one another, but to love as He loves. God’s “one anothering” love rejoices, edifies, seeks good, comforts, serves, bears, considers others better than self, intercedes, and encourages, all in humility. I have found that some of the actions above come more easily for me to perform than others and that some people are easier to love than others. When it is hard for me to love a person, it’s because they are different and unfamiliar to me. God at those times is offering me the opportunity to make a new connection while not holding too tightly to the old.

Wanda Walker, MIT

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Those along your everyday path desperately need “one anothering.” They need a moment of your time for a compliment, a piece of your heart in prayer, or a smile. They may not come in a package that is familiar to you or at a convenient time. What will you do?

## PRAYER

God, we thank you for the opportunities to “one another” others as you have loved us. Find us obedient to your command. For the time that it is difficult, show us what is in ourselves that needs to change for us to do your will. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.



# DAY 24

*"I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys."*

– Song of Songs 2:1 (NRSV)

## NEW CONFIDENCE: THROUGH THE EYES OF GOD

What is unique about the Shulammite woman in the Song of Songs is that we tend to view her life through the eyes of others. But what would happen if we chose to view the Shulammite woman through her own eyes and words? In doing this, it becomes easy to see the social and theological value of her testimony. To see an attestation of one's confidence that propels her to go against the grain and pursue what she wants: the things in life that matter most to her.

A good friend once advised me, "learn to be your own source of confidence." True confidence is being able to love yourself with or without the admiration of others. It's knowing who you are as a beloved child of God and never allowing something or someone to cause you to doubt or question that love. What could we accomplish if we began to look at ourselves the way God views us? What could we become if we embraced the knowledge of who we are and truly began to walk in it? The possibilities would be endless.

Deja Wilson

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

*What stands in the way of viewing yourself the way God views you?*

## PRAYER

*Dear most gracious God, I pray that you open my eyes to see myself the way you see me. Uproot the lies of others I have believed about myself and allow me to walk daily in the confidence of the truth you have revealed. In Jesus' name,  
I pray, Amen.*



# DAY 25

“As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishers. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.’”

— Matthew 4:18-19 (NRSVUE)

## NEW WORK: OLD WORK, NEW PURPOSE

Recently, I visited a friend who purchased a home. When viewing the dining room, I complimented her on the chairs, assuming they were new because I did not recognize them from her former residence. To my surprise, I learned the chairs were not a new purchase but repurposed old chairs.

One definition of the word new is “not existing before.” It is essential to note this refers to outcomes, not constitutive components. Therefore, we must avoid the erroneous assumption that the old cannot participate in the production of newness. It can develop from what already exists, and this truth applies to our efforts in life. God can take the work we already do in our homes, careers, churches, and communities and transform it, giving a familiar project a fresh purpose. As we see in the gospel, Jesus didn’t change the work of the fishers; instead, he repurposed their actions by giving them a new aim.

Minister Otis Byrd, Jr.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

From what existing work(s) do you discern God calling you to a new purpose? What adjustments might be required?

## PRAYER

God, illuminate and clarify the emerging, fresh opportunities and purpose possible in our current works. Empower us with grace to courageously follow you and embrace the new purpose to which you call us and our work. Amen.



# DAY 26

“And we know [with great confidence] that God [who is deeply concerned about us] causes all things to work together [as a plan] for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His plan and purpose.”

– Romans 8:28 (AMP)

## NEW PERSPECTIVE: IT'S ALL GOOD

Expanded Scripture: Romans 8:26-29 (AMP)

There have been challenging times in my life when I really wanted to give God the side-eye and ask, “Why God? Why me?” and “Why now!?” As I have “matured” I don’t use these expressions as often but there are still occasions when I wonder, “Why is this happening?” However, as I look at the big picture (of my life) and reflect on how truly blessed I am, I am often conflicted about going down those paths. This scripture passage reminds us that God has a plan for everything that unfolds in our lives. The good, the bad AND the ugly have a purpose...together they are molding us into what God had planned all along. It is incumbent upon us to trust God in ALL things because, ultimately, She always has something good and amazing planned.

Reflection: Remember to praise God with the same fervor for the good and the not-so-good because everything God does is for our good.

Deacon Vernon Hammett

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Remember to praise God with the same fervor for the good and the not-so-good  
because everything God does is for our good.

## PRAYER

Thank you Lord for all you do. For the ups, the downs, and the crazy turn-arounds. We place our trust in your plan for our life because, no matter what, we have the blessed assurance that “it’s ALL good.” In Jesus’ name, Amen.





# DAY 27

“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No: to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age...”

— Titus 2:11, 12 (NIV)

## NEW DISCIPLINE

READ: Titus 2:11-14 (NIV)

For most of us, when we hear the word “discipline” it conjures up not-so-pleasant thoughts of childhood punishment. Or, as Christians, we think of Godly rebuke, recalling the verse from Proverbs, that “The Lord disciplines those that He loves.” Indeed, the primary definition of the word in the Oxford Dictionary is, “the process of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience.”

But there’s another aspect of discipline that, as Christians, we should embrace. These are the Spiritual Disciplines, so named because they are practices, that by design can lead to transformation. Their purpose is to aid our spiritual growth and deepen our relationship to God. The Disciplines categorized as Inward include fasting and are like training exercises for our spiritual life. During Seek 2023, many of us will practice the inward discipline of fasting. We can also pair that with meditation, study or prayer, or one of the other disciplines, to strengthen ourselves spiritually. So, let’s try a New Discipline to grow closer to God.

Deacon M. Tia Johnson

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

How can God use spiritual disciplines as tools to draw me closer to Jesus?

## PRAYER

Lord, help me, through the Spiritual Disciplines to draw closer to you, and thereby be transformed, to conform to your will and way. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.



# DAY 28

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are weighed down.  
The Lord loves the godly.

— Psalm 146:8 (NLT)

## NEW VISION: SIGHT CORRECTION

READ: Psalm 146:5-8

My husband Hal had cataract surgery a while ago. Before the procedure, he had trouble driving at night because of the starbursts that appeared out of nowhere that hampered his sight. Objects and people also looked blurry to him. But right after the surgery he was amazed that he had nearly 20/20 vision. He even jokingly said I looked better to him! For Hal, it was a miracle to be able to see clearly once again.

Several stories in the Gospels tell us about people who had their sight miraculously restored by Jesus. He laid hands on some of them to heal. For others, He just spoke and sight returned. And for all, their encounter with the Lord changed their lives forever.

The Word tells us that the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. But it's not just physical sight that is restored. Allowing Jesus to operate in our lives also will correct our paths and help us live in a way that is pleasing to Him. With that sight correction we can show others the way to the Lord. And like Hal, they will be able to see their way more clearly.

Deacon Barbranda Walls

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

*What obstacles do I need Jesus to remove to help me see Him more clearly?*

## PRAYER

Father God, you are my vision, leading me in your path of righteousness.  
For this, I am grateful. Amen.



# DAY 29

“...a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment,  
and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table.”

— Matthew 26:7 (NRSVUE)

## NEW ANOINTING: AN UNEXPECTED SOURCE

“Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, “Why this waste? For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum and the money given to the poor.” But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me.”

— Matthew 26: 6-10 (NRSVUE)

I love a surprise. Whether it's a proposal or a Beyonce album, I love the unexpected. From unexpected checks to miracle pregnancies, God will defy logic to bless us. The surprise in this story is that Jesus does not perform the anointing. The anointing comes from an unexpected source. A woman anoints Jesus for burial and that anointing acknowledges change is coming. She teaches us how to SEEK God according to God's future possibilities. Jesus lets a woman get close enough to him to pour oil. The joy of SEEK is that Jesus isn't afraid of intimacy. Be encouraged that God calls your service “good.” Pour your oil, your prayers, your fasting, and your worship over God today.

Minister Jessica Anderson

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

How do you hope God will describe your service after SEEK?

## PRAYER

God, bring us close. Help us to pour over you this day.



# DAY 30

“Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters...  
Do not remember the former things of old. I am about to do a new thing...”

— Isaiah 43:16,18-19a (NRSV)

## NEW TRUST: TRUST AND SEA

As a master scuba diver, I would one day find myself drowning in the sea of grief without a breathing apparatus in my mouth! I had weathered the passing of several of my loved ones in just a few years, but the loss of my mother left me wondering if I would ever make it back to the land of “wholeness.”

A few months after my mother passed, I was teaching a class and a wave of grief came over me. I signaled for coverage as I ran to the bathroom to release a cry that my classroom could not contain. As I lay on a cold bathroom floor overcome with new and old grief, it became clear that I had not healed from the loss of my father, let alone my mother. Although the Lord had brought me through the past pain and loss of loved ones, I would have to trust God in new ways to experience his healing touch, restoration, and new blessings in my life.

God’s word promises that if we commit our way to the Lord and trust in Him, He will act! (Psalm 37:5). The Israelites could only see a massive body of water and yet God parted the sea. The prophet Isaiah later urged them to trust God in a new way. Captivity in Babylon was coming to an end even if they could not see a river of deliverance. God wants us to surrender the hard seasons of our lives to Him by trusting him in new and unseen ways.

Minister Donna Arrendell

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What new way is God asking you to trust Him so that He can do a new thing in your life?

## PRAYER

Dear God, when we are faced with long-suffering seasons and difficult circumstances, we need you to remind us that you are always doing a new thing, providing for us in ways seen and unseen. Amen.





# DAY 31

“But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego — who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up. “But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

– Daniel 3:12; 18 (NIV)

## NEW CONVICTION: WHAT CONVICTS YOU?

As we set out in this New Year looking toward doing new things, we may need an old friend to come along with us. I’ve come to learn that courage is the attribute we have that enables us to act, even in the face of fear. In other words, without fear it is difficult for one to claim courageousness.

Daniel and Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego — their colonizer names) saw firsthand the dark and heinous nature of the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. The king set an image to represent his own divine power and threatened death to those who would not worship his image.

But the three Hebrew boys had their own convictions. They were raised to worship the God of heaven. When asked to worship the king, they refused knowing death was the consequence. Their conviction allayed their fear, fueled their courage, and confounded the king. The result was that the presence of their conviction invited the presence of God during a frightening ordeal.

Rev. William Spencer

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What convicts you?

## PRAYER

Lord, as we seek a new thing in this new year, allow us to bring our conviction to invite your presence. Amen.



# DAY 32

Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf was in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth.

— Genesis 8:6-12 (NKJV)

## NEW HOPE: NEW HOPE AND A FUTURE!

To “test the waters” after the rain, Noah sent out a dove. The first time it could not land anywhere. He sent it out again and it returned with an olive leaf. The dove brought evidence that there was vegetation growing; evidence of new life. It brought confirmation of God’s promise of life after devastation, which gave him and his family new hope and a future.

This summer in Ghana, we visited the Baptist Vocational Center for young women some of whom were sold by their families into slavery. They were “bought” back and taught a trade of their interest that empowers, sustains, and provides a life for them and their children. We thought we would meet women without light in their eyes because of what they had been through, but we were pleasantly mistaken. They had unspeakable joy and new hope given by God through the center, their olive leaf. New hope became light in the middle of darkness and their mourning literally turned into dancing.

Rev. Marcia M. Norfleet

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

*In the midst of despair and not knowing where we might land, God sends us olive leaves to confirm God’s promises of hope and a future. We just have to be open to seeing and receiving them.*

## PRAYER

Lord, let us find hope in the evidence of your promises. Amen.



# DAY 33

“Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away,  
yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”

– 2 Corinthians 4:16 (NKJV)

## NEW INTEGRITY: DAILY RENEWAL

Expanded Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:2; 5, 16

When I was in the military, I committed daily to keeping my body in top physical condition. Then God got my attention about the need to commit myself to daily devotion time, just as much as I was committed to exercising.

Over the years, my daily devotions have led me to pray daily that God searches me for anything that lacks integrity. I want to be honest in my dealings with others and be morally upright to promote unity and wholeness in the body of Christ. Integrity is not optional if we hope to be a reflection of God’s love and serious about our assignments to be a witness to those outside of the faith. As Christians, we may be the only Christ that people see.

In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul suggests that the inward person needs to be renewed daily. That is done through prayer and meditation. Taking that time builds integrity. It is time well spent.

– Deacon Russell Easter

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

How do you display integrity on a daily basis?

## PRAYER

Dear Lord, please search me, and cleanse me from anything that interferes with the message that you want to emanate from my life. Renew me daily and fill me with integrity that is enriched by the truth of your word and time spent with you each day.

## ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH | SEEK 2023 DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

# DAY 34

“I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me, hear my words.”

— Psalm 17:6 (NRSV).

## NEW EXPECTATION: I EXPECT!

Noticeable within David’s cry to the Lord is the expectation and assurance that his prayer will not go unanswered. Before David’s appeal for the Lord’s attention, he already expects that God is going to answer him. In short, David recognizes that a key aspect of his desperate plea is his ability to expect that something will happen. David teaches us that prayer without expectation is pointless because there is no hope that God will respond.

We must adopt an attitude of expectation when approaching God in prayer. Expectation shows the Lord that we trust in His ability to work in great and unthinkable ways. Prior to being accepted into Duke Divinity School, I prayed for 80 days with the expectation that God would allow me to attend this prestigious institution. On December 15, the acceptance letter arrived. I believe the Lord worked powerfully because I expected God to work in a magnificent way. When we expect God to answer our prayers, we are demonstrating our confidence in the Lord’s unfailing intervention.

Minister Eric Edwards, Jr.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What prayers do you expect the Lord to answer?

## PRAYER

O Lord, turn our hearts to you. When we are lost, expect you to find us. As we await your action, we cry out in prayer “incline your ear to me, hear my words.” O Lord, help us to have confidence that during our desperate pleas, Your ears hear us, and your actions will benefit us.  
In Jesus’ name, Amen.





# DAY 35

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.”

— Genesis 1:1-4a (NLT)

## NEW KINDNESS: CREATION AS KINDNESS

Kindness is selflessness, compassion, and mercy. In the text, we learn of God’s creation labors, but we must know — God does not have to create. God selflessly, compassionately, and mercifully chooses to, gift creation as kindness. And beloved, creation is good.

When we think about these gifts and God’s intentional work of forming and nurturing, we can honor them — earth, animals, humans — by choosing to be kind; we know not their struggles. We can be gentle with ourselves, speak life-giving words, compassionately care for the earth, greet the unhoused, welcome the “untouchables,” seeing goodness and worthiness in all God’s creations.

This is not easy; we know evil exists and destroys. But God is still kind. God continues to create even from chaos, challenging us to be kind even through evil. We can choose this, co-creating goodness anew.

ArDonna D. Hamilton, MIT

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

From whom am I withholding kindness? What hope of new creation can come from choosing to be kind?

## PRAYER

Creator God, thank you for gifting everything life. Please help us cherish it by being kind, even when it’s difficult.  
Amen.



# DAY 36

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”

– 1 Peter 5:6

## NEW HUMILITY: HELP FOR THE HUMBLLED

As a college student, I loved to party in New Orleans in the 90s and I was positioned to have the best time of my young adult life. I was very popular, and by this time, a good student who loved to excel. After finishing undergrad, I knew I wanted to go back to school and pursue a master’s degree in public health. However, there was one thing that stood in my way: The GRE. I took the test three times and just never made the mark on this standardized test.

This was humbling for me because I always had success in the classroom. My pride was hurt, but most importantly, I had to deal with the reality that everything doesn’t always go as planned and sometimes you need more support than you are willing to admit.

I swallowed my pride and contacted the graduate school dean, who to my surprise, was moved by my humility and told me to stop taking the GRE. She ultimately submitted my name as a student on probation who needed to earn at least a 3.5 GPA in order to maintain a scholarship. I am grateful to report that I maintained a 3.8 GPA, the probation was lifted, and I became a full-time graduate student and now have two master’s degrees.

As I reflect upon this, it brings me so much joy and gratitude to know that when you humble yourself, this leaves room for the Lord to touch any situation. The scripture in 1 Peter 5:6 tells us that if you humble yourself, He will lift you up in due time. Continue to stand on His word and know that your ability to decrease gives God permission to provide the desired increase.

Amen.

Rev. Shavon Arline-Bradley

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

When do you recall having to humble yourself in a situation? How did the Lord move in your favor because of your humility?

## PRAYER

Lord, I thank you for ensuring that I have humbling experiences to make me fall to my knees. Allow me to sustain my humility so that I may not turn into someone who is haughty and ungrateful. Keep my eyes on you and your will for me. Thank you for your grace, mercy and kindness and most of all for your son Jesus. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.



# DAY 37

“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, outbursts, and blasphemies, with all malice, be taken away from you. And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.”

— Ephesians 4:31-32 (NKJV)

## NEW FORGIVENESS: HAND IT OVER TO HEAVEN

One of the “new things” that God is releasing in your life is a renewed call to forgiveness. However, forgiveness occurs when you truly get in touch with everything that YOU need deliverance from. To experience anything new in God, we must be delivered from bondage to the things of old. How many of us are navigating life from an old map of who you used to be? Old pain, outdated coping mechanisms, expired relationships, former ways of thinking, speaking, and behaving — all things that keep you from stepping into the new. Stop being in bondage to things you love that don’t love you back and being connected to things that are killing your calling. The answer is not in what you pick up, the answer is in what you let go of.

Paul writes this Ephesian epistle amid everything the church was then (and you might be now) experiencing — sickness, stress, anxiety, bondage, sleepless nights, and pain. Despite what’s going on in your life, God has a secret to tell you: You may be asking God for something, but God is telling you to let go of something. You do not have enough room to receive the new when you’re hanging on to so much old. You don’t have enough freedom from certain things to be able to invest in the new thing that God is doing.

To deliver means to hand over something to the proper address. My God, that’s a shout! God is saying it is time to hand over the things that used to bring you comfort, hand over the past pain and trauma, and hand over the former habits that are draining the very life from your body. Therefore, it’s time to hand it ALL over to heaven!

Rev. Dr. Shelley E. Brown

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

How many of us are navigating life from an old map of who you used to be?

## PRAYER

Lord, help me to refuse to rehash and rehearse my hurts, because that will only keep me in bondage. You are a God that heals and reveals, guards and guides, defends and delivers. Therefore, help me go forth in my deliverance, go forth in being set free, go forth in letting it go, and walk in the newness of joy and peace that only forgiveness of myself — and others — can bring. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

## ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH | SEEK 2023 DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

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# DAY 38

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

— Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

## NEW PEACE: EVERY PIECE OF MY PEACE

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus” is arguably one of the most beloved hymns of the church. Still, as often as we listen to or even dare to sing its lyrics, do we ever really take the time to consider the actual peace forfeited because of our fragmented and selective prayers? Inasmuch as we pray, do we ever stop to consider the correlation between our unuttered concerns and our lack of or disrupted peace? Whether it is because we have deemed our concerns too insignificant to pray about or we are just too ashamed to pray about them, we actively choose to abandon the promise of God’s peace when we do not pray, petition and present our requests to God in EVERY situation as the scripture instructs. Imagine if, instead of forfeiture, we claimed every piece of our peace by engaging God, through prayer, in all things. “Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!” (Joseph M. Scriven, 1855)

Rev. Dr. Charnika Louise Hayes

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What are the reclaimed pieces you no longer will abandon, but will bring to God in prayer?

## PRAYER

Dear Lord, please search me, and cleanse me from anything that interferes with the message that you want to emanate from my life. Renew me daily and fill me with integrity that is enriched by the truth of your word and time spent with you each day.





# DAY 39

“...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus,  
the author and finisher of our faith...”

– Hebrews 12: 1–2 (KJV)

## NEW DETERMINATION

Multi-tasking is highly overrated. Our ability to focus is significantly hampered when we try to do many things at once. Electronic devices and apps mislead us into believing that we can do it all, only to discover we have missed essential things in pursuit of many things. Hebrews urges us to focus on Jesus. In our busy and overcrowded days, let us never forget what is most essential — Jesus. When we focus on Jesus, some things will fade into the background while others will come into focus, and our purpose will become clearer. The endurance Hebrews speaks of is the determination to show up every day, committed to this work. In the days ahead let us practice doing less and focusing on the essential things, the essential one, and see how our lives become prioritized and ordered. Oh, for hearts determined to stay fixed on Jesus.

Rev. Dr. Judy Fentress-Williams

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What small practice can I incorporate into my routine that will help me stay centered on Jesus?

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# DAY 40

“He gives power to the tired and worn out, and strength to the weak”

— Isaiah 40:29 (TLB)

## NEW STRENGTH: REALLY STRONG

As a graduate assistant/collegiate strength and conditioning coach, my son, Josiah, helps athletes maximize strength, and prevent or reduce injury. He’s also a superfan of Strongman® competitions—and has me hooked on the sport too. So, when the History Channel’s reality show “The Strongest Man in History” aired, we sat glued to the TV screen. It featured four friends, some of our favorite title holders, at sites around the world performing stunts from the past, and investigating Strongman® tall tales.

During one episode, they pushed an Atlas stone weighing hundreds of pounds. We were mesmerized by their ability to effortlessly do so. They made it look so easy! Today’s competitors really are strong. Interestingly, we learned that some former strongmen were not as powerful as history records. In fact, some of their feats were humanly impossible!

It’s human nature to exaggerate strength. Over the years, I’ve pretended to be strong when tired and worn out from grieving, workplace drama, parenting solo, and other situations. But I’ve discovered that faking strength does not provide the spiritual, physical, mental or emotional muscle I need to get through life’s toughest situations.

What does work? Praying for strength. Fasting for strength. And trusting God to help us be really strong.

Lisa A. Crayton, MIT

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

*How and why have you exaggerated your strength?*

## PRAYER

*Lord, please give me the daily strength I need.*



# THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN SEEK 2023!

## CONGRATULATIONS

YOU'VE COMPLETED SEEK 2023. TODAY IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO  
WRITE HOW THIS EXPERIENCE HAS CHANGED YOU!

# DANIEL FAST RECIPES

## BAKED OATMEAL

- 1½ cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1½ cups unsweetened almond milk
- ½ cup unsweetened applesauce
- ¼ cup chopped dried apricots
- ¼ cup chopped dates or raisins
- ¼ cup chopped pecans or walnuts
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Put all ingredients in a large bowl and stir well. Transfer to an 8 by 8-inch baking dish that has been lightly rubbed with olive oil. Pour oatmeal mixture into dish and bake 45–50 minutes or until slightly browned and crispy on top.

Yield: 6 servings (serving size: 2 squares)

by Kristen Feola, “Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast”

## BLUEBERRY MANGO SMOOTHIE

- 1 cup water or unsweetened almond milk, coconut milk, rice milk, or soy milk
- 1 cup fresh or frozen mango chunks
- 1 fresh or frozen banana, peeled, sliced
- 1½ cup fresh or frozen blueberries
- 1 tablespoon flaxseed meal, optional
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened coconut flakes

Mix all ingredients in a blender until smooth.

by Kristen Feola, “Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast”

## APPLE-CINNAMON HOT CEREAL

- 1 (14.5-ounce) can coconut milk
- 2 cups cooked brown rice
- 1 apple, chopped, unpeeled (about 1½ cups)
- 1 banana, mashed (about 1 cup)

1 cup roughly chopped dates

1½ teaspoons cinnamon

Pinch nutmeg

½ cup toasted pecans or walnuts

Add coconut milk, brown rice, apple, banana, dates, cinnamon, and nutmeg to a medium saucepan. Cook over medium-low heat about 10 minutes or until heated through. Stir frequently to prevent burning on bottom of pan. Sprinkle 1-tablespoon pecans or walnuts over each serving.

Yield: 8 servings (serving size: about 1½ cup)

by Kristen Feola, “Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast”

## STIR-FRY VEGETABLES WITH BROWN RICE

- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 3 green onions (finely chopped)
- 3 tablespoons fresh ginger (minced)
- 4 cups fresh broccoli (chopped)
- ½ pound fresh green beans (chopped)
- 2 carrots (peeled and sliced on diagonal)
- 1 bell pepper (red, yellow, or orange)
- 2 cloves garlic (minced)
- 4 cups greens (chopped kale, bok choy, spinach, collards, etc)
- 1 can sliced water chestnuts (drained)
- 3 cups cooked brown rice
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1½ cups peas (if frozen run under water to thaw)
- ½ cup toasted sliced almonds

Heat a deep skillet or wok over medium heat for about 1 minute. Add oil and heat for 1 minute. Add green onions and ginger. Sauté for 5 minutes. Add broccoli, green beans, carrots, bell pepper, and garlic. Stir fry for 8–10 minutes. Add greens and toss for about 2 minutes or until greens are wilted. Stir in water chestnuts, brown rice, soy sauce, peas, and almonds. Serve as a complete meal

by Susan Gregory “The Daniel Fast”

## CHIPOTLE BLACK BEAN BURGERS

- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup mashed cooked sweet potatoes (about 1 large sweet potato, peeled)
- ¼ cup oat flour (see Recipe Notes) or brown rice flour
- ½ tablespoon dried parsley
- ¼ teaspoon chipotle chile pepper seasoning
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper

Preheat oven to broil setting. With a potato masher or fork, mash black beans in a large bowl, leaving about 1/4 of the beans whole. Mix in sweet potatoes, oat flour, parsley, chipotle chile pepper seasoning, garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Scoop out 1/3 cup of bean mixture, and place on an 11 x 17-inch baking sheet that has been rubbed with olive oil. Flatten and shape into a circle with spatula. Repeat with the remaining bean mixture to make 6 burgers.

Broil 4 inches from heat about 7–8 minutes or until golden brown. Flip burgers carefully with spatula. Broil 2–3 more minutes, and serve.

Yield: 6 servings (serving size: 1 burger)

by Kristen Feola, “Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast”

## GREEK-STYLE STUFFED PEPPERS

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup chopped onion
- ½ cup diced zucchini
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 3 chopped canned artichokes, drained
- ½ cup chopped black olives
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano flakes or 1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley or 1 tablespoon chopped

fresh parsley

½ teaspoon salt

2 medium bell peppers (green, orange, red, and/or yellow)

2 cups cooked quinoa

½ tablespoons pine nuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place artichokes in a food processor, and pulse until artichokes are chopped well. Set aside. Heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onion and zucchini. Cook 3–5 minutes or until vegetables are softened. Lower heat, and add garlic. Cook 1 minute, stirring constantly so garlic doesn't burn. Add tomato sauce, artichokes, olives, oregano, parsley, and salt. Cook 15 minutes, or until sauce is thickened. While sauce is cooking, prepare peppers. Cut in half lengthwise, and remove stems and seeds. Place peppers in boiling water for 5 minutes. Drain in colander, and place in a large baking dish. When sauce is finished, mix in the quinoa and pine nuts. Stir well. Spoon mixture evenly into pepper halves. Add hot water to dish to a depth of 1/2 inch. Bake uncovered for 20 minutes.

by Kristen Feola, “Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast”

## CAJUN RED BEANS AND RICE

½ tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

½ cup chopped green pepper

½ cup chopped red onion

½ cup sliced celery

¼ cup water

2 teaspoons Creole Seasoning

1 (15.5-ounce) can red kidney beans, rinsed and drained

2 cups cooked brown rice

Heat olive oil in a large, deep skillet over medium heat. Add green peppers, onions, and celery. Cook until vegetables are softened, about 3–5 minutes. Add water and Creole Seasoning. Stir well. Mix in kidney beans and rice. Lower heat and cook another 5 minutes or until heated through.

Yield: 8 servings (serving size: 1/2 cup)

by Kristen Feola, “Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast”







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