

JANUARY 22 - FEBRUARY 11

# iThirst

ANNUAL CHURCH FAST



**STEP 2024**

## DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

REV. DR. HOWARD-JOHN WESLEY, SENIOR PASTOR



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# 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!

This year, our theme for SEEK 2024, is “iThirst”. Over the course of 21 days, we are seeking God, drawing closer in relationship, receiving clarity and understanding for what the Lord desires to speak in our individual and collective life. As such, daily we will gather in the morning at 7:00AM ET for a LIVE ZOOM prayer to bring focus to our day, followed by independent meditation through our SEEK devotional and prayer journal. A new component for this year, we have added an evening prayer at 7:00PM ET to close out your day to encourage you to begin again; so join us again using the same LIVE ZOOM information that you will receive separately. 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.

It is our prayer that SEEK 2024 will serve as the spiritual nourishment for our souls as we prepare to receive our assignments from God. The Bible says, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?” (Psalms 42: 1–2). I am delighted you have accepted the invitation to “SEEK 2024: iThirst”. I fully believe, your participation in SEEK 2024 is not only for you, but also for our entire church community and the nation world-wide. If you are new to Alfred Street, or to SEEK, we welcome you. We have a saying here at ASBC, “amazing things happen when you say YES to God”. We cannot wait to hear of the many testimonies that will be birthed through SEEK 2024: iThirst! Let’s pray together!

#iThirstSEEK,



Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley, Senior Pastor



# FASTING

## FASTING SCHEDULE

### Entire Fast

#### No social media & No shopping!!!

Description: From January 22 until February 11 please post on all social media platforms the ASBC Seek 2024 graphic symbolizing you will not be available for any social media engagement.

Additionally, during this time frame we are asking each participant to abstain from non-essential purchases. By non-essential we mean all luxury and/or discretionary expenses.

### Week One: January 22-28, 2024

#### Eliminate Addictive Vices: No Sugar, No Caffeine, No Alcohol, Tobacco, Vaping

Description: On this first week, we are eliminating addictive vices from our lifestyle. As anticipated urges arise, this is a great opportunity to pray for discernment and self-control. Invite the Lord to speak to you and how these vices may hinder you from hearing the Lord's voice.

### Week Two: (Progressive)

#### January 29 – February 4, 2024

##### Week One + Daniel Fast

Description: During this second week, we incorporate all that we committed in Week One, plus a commitment to the Daniel Fast consisting of fruits, vegetables, grains, and water. For a complete list of Daniel Fast Foods, see section posted on the ASBC Seek 2024 page.

If you can, join us in the Daniel Fast or maintain the Week One commitment.

### Week Three\*: February 5 – February 11

#### Week One \* Continue the Daniel Fast or shift to Liquid / Water only

Description: This week incorporates Week One plus adds in a "liquid or water only" fast at your discretion. In this our final week, we want to completely focus on the Lord. We know the temptations are intense, and that stamina may be waning. However, be of good courage, we know what happens when we

earnestly seek the Lord with all our hearts. Instead of lamenting the sacrifice, we focus on all that is to be gained. Again, if you can, join us, or continue your commitment from Week Two.

## WHAT IS FASTING?

As you prepare to embark on Seek 2024, 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 under goes 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”

# Day 1: iSeek

REV. DR. ROBERT “TY” JONES

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

— Jeremiah 29:14a

I’m willing to wager that the majority of Americans’ first encounter with the word “seek” came from a game. As children, one child stands and counts to 10 while the others disperse to their various hiding places. The objective of the game is not to be found. Most desire never to be found. The object of the game is to have the seeker give up seeking.

It’s enjoyable when endless seeking is confined to a child’s play, but in relationship to our God, the emotions are quite different. To a community forced to engage with their captors and attempting to discern the expiration of their discomfort, God speaks these words, “I will be found by you.” Please note that these words are spoken after their request to be delivered. To some degree, God says, “No, but you will be able to find me”.

These words come to us in our quest to seek after God. God makes the promise to position God’s self to be found. If we seek, we will find. If we have not found, then perhaps we are not seeking. The prophet states, “You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.” This “seek” requires the totality of who we are. God doesn’t play Hide-n-seek with God’s children.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Have you ever felt there were seasons when God was hiding from you? What did that look like?

## PRAYER

Lord, may we be ever mindful of our relationship with you. We seek after you fervently and with confidence, knowing that the journey will lead to you. With you is where we desire to be. Amen.

PRAYER NOTES & JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

# Day 2: iWait

REV. DR. ZINA JACQUE

“I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. . . . Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love, and with him is full redemption.”

— Psalm 130:5, 7

We wait in lines. We wait at stop lights. We wait for the diagnosis. We wait for the phone to ring. We wait when others tell us to wait. It is often hard to wait because waiting feels like a passive activity enforced by circumstances outside our control. But the Psalmist has a different understanding of waiting. The Hebrew word used in this pericope is *הָוָה*, (pronounced kaw-vaw'), and it means to look eagerly, hope, or expect. The Psalmist does not experience the act of waiting as passive but active. She recognizes that to wait on God is to place confidence in the one whose unfailing love will, in due season, redeem all things.

During SEEK, you may find yourself in a season of waiting. If you do, do not fear or despair. God is in the waiting with you, working everything out for your good. Wait with an eager expectation that God is up to something. Each time waiting grows difficult, turn it into a spiritual discipline by declaring, I will wait for you, God, because you know, better than I, what I need.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Beloved, for what are you waiting? Wait with confidence and in hope. Your God is at work even as you wait for the full redemption of God's promises.

## PRAYER

They that wait upon the Lord shall be renewed. Lord, help me wait until my season of renewal comes. Amen.



PRAYER NOTES & JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

# Day 3: iDesire

REV. DR. JUDY FENTRESS-WILLIAMS

*“I will seek the one whom my soul loves.” — Song of Solomon, 3:2b, NIV*

*“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me.” — Song of Solomon 7:10, NRSV*

Our culture is obsessed with love relationships. Most reality TV shows are variations of a tragic love story featuring individuals who settle for watered-down relationships because they don’t believe they deserve authentic love.

The Song of Solomon offers us a different kind of love story. Two lovers share a connection so powerful that it transforms them, giving them boldness. This love is their only desire, and they will settle for nothing less. No separation of time or space will deter them. The only thing that matters is being together. Each one lives to be with the object of desire, the one “my soul loves.”

During this time of fasting, we set aside distractions we settled for when we felt undeserving of God’s love. In this season of seeking, I pray we will remember that God’s love for us will transform us. I hope we remember God’s desire for us is greater than our desire for God.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Can you remember the ways  
God lavished love on you?  
Can you accept the fact that God’s love has  
nothing to do with your worthiness?  
Where did you see God’s love and utter  
devotion to you today?

## PRAYER

Remind me today, Lord, that your desire for me is always greater than my desire for you. Help me to seek you with singularity and trust your love for me. Amen

PRAYER NOTES & JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

# Day 4: iPray: Speak to Me

REV. KIMBERLY NORRINGTON

“Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.”

– Jeremiah 29:12, NIV

I have many cherished memories of my mother. However, the memories I hold most dear are the many conversations we shared. I shared my fears, my desires and my dreams with the person I trusted most, not realizing how important her words of wisdom would be for me even after she would no longer be here in the physical. Communication was the foundation for the strength and closeness of our relationship.

Like any loving parent, God has a desire to listen and hear our voices. Prayer is the vehicle of our direct communication with God. Relationships are built and strengthened through communication. Our relationship with God is no different. The act of prayer draws us closer to God and allows for an intimate relationship to be formed with the one who loves us both as a mother and a father. While we are not able to sit face to face with God, when we pray fervently, with faith from our hearts, God will answer. When God answers our prayers it may come in the form of thoughts, spiritual feelings, scripture or even the actions of others. Our faith and God’s power come together in a beautiful symphony to affect change in any situation.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

How will you enhance your prayer  
life to create a more intimate  
relationship with God?

## PRAYER

Lord, please incline your ear to the petitions of my heart  
and align my spirit that I might hear you clearly.

PRAYER NOTES & JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

# Day 5: iReflect: What's in the Mirror?

MINISTER RASHEEM ROOKE

*“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.”*

— James 1:23–24, NIV

In life's hustle, we often forget to pause and reflect on our walk with God. Reflection acts as a soul's mirror, revealing our true selves in God's light.

James teaches us that hearing God's word isn't enough; we must let it change us. Daily, we can peer into this divine mirror, seeing our imperfections alongside God's immense love and grace.

Through reflection, we gain clarity and see the path God has set—one of compassion, kindness, and humility. We hear God's whisper in these quiet moments, guiding us away from worldly distractions.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Let's commit to deeply contemplating this spiritual mirror, keeping its revelations at the forefront of our minds throughout the day. This way, we align our deeds with our faith, embodying God's teachings.

## PRAYER

*Lord, give me the wisdom to seek reflective moments with You. In these times, help me see myself through Your eyes and live out Your word daily. Amen.*



PRAYER NOTES & JOURNAL REFLECTIONS



# Day 6: iAm

MINISTER PAUL H. HYPOLITE, JR.

*“It’s the heart that matters most. May the joy of the Lord rest upon those who never get tired of trusting Him”*

— Psalm 51: 10–12

We should enter this SEEK journey with a certain level of introspection. When we look introspectively, we realize there are areas in our lives where we are not as strong or well put together as it seems. Every year that I fast, there are three questions I ask myself:

1. What am I expecting from God?
2. What will I surrender to God?
3. What is the anticipated outcome of the fast?

An example of an introspective look is Psalms 51. David’s life did not align with God, and he begged to be cleansed, restored, and renewed. As we SEEK, how dirty, worn, and weakened are we willing to admit to God? There must be a point in our lives where we leave everything out on the table to God and allow Him to put us back together again. That is my anticipation during this SEEK journey. God knows who I AM, where I AM, and what I AM not. I pray that where we are not, He will increase so that we can become who He created us to be.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

As we SEEK, how dirty, worn, and weakened are we willing to admit to God? There must be a point in our lives where we leave everything out on the table to God and allow Him to put us back together again.

## PRAYER

God, we thank you for your grace and mercy. As we navigate this SEEK journey, help us realize who we are so that you will be glorified in us. Remove whatever hinders us from being closer to you and fill us with what will please you. We are In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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# Day 7: iConfess

REV. DR. ZINA JACQUE

“Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

– Phillipians 2:11

When you hear the words, I confess it is so easy to think of Law and Order dramas where the guilty party stands up and says, I confess, I confess. However, television dramas do not reveal the most profound meaning of the word, confess. The Greek word (εξομολογεω, pronounced ex-om-ol-og-eh’-o) used in this text means to agree vigorously and even joyfully.

When we confess Christ, we agree that Jesus is the Messiah. When we confess our sins, we agree that our actions or thoughts do not align with how God desires us to live.

Confession is vigorous agreement and joyful alignment.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

During SEEK 2024, in what new ways do you wish to agree and align with God? Come, beloved, confess before the God who loves you, and see how 2024 unfolds before you.

## PRAYER

I bow before you, God, in an act of confession. Align me with your will for my life, as I agree with your plans for me. Amen.

PRAYER NOTES & JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

# Day 8: iSurrender: Nevertheless!

REV. DR. LESLIE COPELAND

*“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me, yet not my will but yours be done.”*

— Luke 22:42

In one of his most vulnerable moments, Jesus pleads with God to remove from him the excruciating weight of the cup he was born to bear. He came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. Yet, as his divine purpose collided with the reality of its cost, Jesus begged God to remove the cup from him.

Despite his anguish, Jesus prayed not my will but yours be done. Nevertheless, iSurrender!

I was reminded of this prayer of Jesus when one of my favorite uncles died from cancer. I had prayed fervently for God to heal him and asked a group of prayer warrior friends to join me in interceding for him. Ultimately, he did not recover, and I was devastated. When I told a friend who had been praying with me that my uncle had died, she replied, “We submit to God’s will.” Her words catapulted me to this Garden of Gethsemane moment with Jesus and reminded me that God was with me in my grief. *Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done, O God.*

Surrendering to God can sometimes feel like anguish. To surrender is to release our will, wants, and desires to an Almighty God. It means to let go of our sense of right and wrong, our understanding of justice, and to submit to the will, way, and timing of God — because our God is faithful, trustworthy, and able. iSurrender allows God to do what only God can, knowing that our “nevertheless” opens us up for God to do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or imagine.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What stops us from surrendering to God’s will in our lives, especially when God doesn’t show up the way we want or expect?

## PRAYER

Lord, fortify and embolden us for the journey ahead.  
Give us the strength and courage we need to surrender to  
Your will in every aspect of our lives. Amen.



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# Day 9: iListen: What's the message?

REV. DR. DUSTIN B. SULLIVAN

"So Eli told Samuel, 'Go and lie down; and if He calls you, say, "Speak, Lord for Your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place."

— 1 Samuel 3:9 NIV

With confidence, I'm sure even blindfolded, you could recognize the voice of those you spend time with. All it would take is a sound sample, maybe the cadence, dialect, or even the phrasing and within a few lines you could make a positive voice recognition. There is something familiar about the experiences you have shared with others that brings clarity to the voice, but not always the message. Perhaps, such is the case when God speaks—whether the still small voice or the vibration of an earth-shaking command. Often on impulse we hear (the requirement of our ear to recognize sound) but miss the skill it takes to listen (the psychological use of our brain to process the deeper message).

I believe Samuel sat in the scramble between what he heard, and the message God wanted him to listen for. Samuel heard the sound but missed the message. He was in the right place, in the right position, yet Eli helped a young Samuel, with this advice: "If He calls you, say, 'Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.'" As a truth that often we hear, more than we are trained to listen.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What's the message you're  
on the verge of missing?

## PRAYER

Lord, while I'm seeking, synthesize the sounds, so I won't miss the message by settling for what I hear. Speak Lord, for your servant is **listening**. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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# Day 10: iReevaluate

REV. DR. LATASHA MORGAN, LPC

*“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test”*

— II Corinthians 13:5–6, NIV

If we only had an opportunity to take one look, we very well might miss the grace of God by only seeing what we see. We might miss the beauty of God’s love for us. With only one look, we might solely focus on the marks we have missed, possibly causing us to overlook the greatest chance that another look grants us. Another look allows us to see the wonder of who we are in the face of Jesus Christ our Savior! As we approach SEEK, I encourage you to pause and embrace the gift to re-evaluate. This gift allows us to examine, evaluate and look at ourselves again and change.

A miraculous difference happens when believers reevaluate. When we look again we are able to see beyond ourselves in order see Christ in us. This is a powerful revelation and act of faith. Do you remember practicing this act before? Remember when you looked at your life and decided that you needed God’s amazing grace? Remember when you made Jesus your choice? You, yes you did that! You reevaluated the state you were in and found the answer and power you needed in Christ Jesus.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

As you reevaluate during SEEK, what areas in your life have been minimally examined that you want to see more Christ in?

## PRAYER

God thank you for the gift of iReevaluate. Help us, with your grace, fully and faithfully embrace it.

PRAYER NOTES & JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

# Day 11: iReimagine: Our Desert Seasons

REV. DONNA ARRENDELL

*“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

— Romans 12:2, NRSV

In 1992, we made the decision to move to Santa Fe, New Mexico. New Mexico was definitely not my first choice—desert, tumbleweed, and coyotes—this city girl was not feeling it! I often referred to living in Santa Fe as my “desert” experience because we had no family close by, my marriage was going through a drought and if that wasn’t enough, African Americans were less than one percent of the population in New Mexico. Talk about a different world!

One morning after dropping my children off at school, I stopped for coffee at my favorite java spot. Choosing to have my devotional time away from home allowed for fewer distractions. As I read my anchor scripture, Romans 12:2, it was clear that the Holy Spirit was beginning a renewal process.

“Reimagine” is a transitive verb; it indicates a transition from what is to a “new” conception of what can be by using your divine imagination. My reimagining journey challenged me to see that my desert season was actually producing fruitful encounters with God that were anything but barren. I developed a lifelong discipline of studying God’s word, the freedom to engage in worship that could transform any kitchen into a sanctuary, and unwavering faith in El Roi, “The God who sees me” in my dry season.

The desert can surprise you! The desert can transform you—but only if you let it.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Is there a desert or difficult season in your life that needs reimagining through the renewing of your mind?

## PRAYER

Lord, help us to reimagine our desert experiences as streams of spiritual renewal. Amen.



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# Day 12: iChoose: Choose Wisely

REV. LISA BAILEY-HARPER

*“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live ”*

– Deuteronomy 30:19

As the sun ushers in a new day, so does the opportunity to shape it with our choices. Let us not squander the precious moments by uttering negativity, but instead, lift our voices in gratitude for the gift of a new day. Our words hold power. Life and death reside on our tongues. Every spoken word and every action carries consequences, shaping the world around us.

Choose gratitude as the melody of your morning, thankfulness as the rhythm of your day. Choose a spirit of optimism and anticipate greatness from our mighty God. Your words, a reflection of your heart, can either build others up or tear them down. Today, let your speech be a fountain of encouragement, a testament to God’s glory.

Be intentional in your choices. Choose kindness, choose compassion. Take a moment to reflect on the impact of your words. Today, don’t let your words be idle; let them be purposeful and uplifting.

Arise, and immerse yourself in meditation upon God’s word. Allow His truth to saturate your being, guiding your choices with His wisdom. Acknowledge the gift of alternatives bestowed by God, recognizing our unique ability to make conscious decisions.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What will you choose today? Embrace love and glorify the One who has bestowed upon you the extraordinary power of choice.

## PRAYER

May your day unfold bathed in the light of mindful, life-affirming decisions. Choose wisely, for in your choices, you shape the tapestry of your existence. Amen.

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# Day 13: iCommit

REV. MARLA C. HAWKINS

*“The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits. Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established.”*

— Proverbs 16: 1–3 NKJV

Have you ever been faced with an opportunity that you thought was too good to refuse? Subsequently, you accepted the offer but had second thoughts shortly thereafter. You initially were thrilled as you anticipated the major benefits this opportunity would bring, only to be faced with empty promises and more requirements that were never mentioned in any of the initial communications. Proverbs 16:3 offers good advice as we are afforded opportunities.

Verse 3 of Proverbs 16 simply states that our initial step is to commit (roll away) our efforts into God’s care. This act as we do the work establishes that having committed our work to God, we are leaving the results up to Him. God sees our efforts and then establishes our thoughts. This is the blessed assurance that comes when we truly commit our ways to God.

When our first thought is God, there is no need for second thoughts.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Is there anything that you are currently doing that you have not submitted to God?

## PRAYER

Omnipotent, omnipresent God, enable us to seek you first in all things. Please, establish our faith so that we fully trust your care. Thank you for being mindful of us as we seek you during this time of prayer and fasting. Amen.

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# Day 14: iRebuild

DEACON CHARLES MAY

“Our lives are destined for glory once we become new with our GOD. . .

Jesus confirms this in Peter’s confession of faith. ”

– Matthew 16:18, NKJV

When we confess our sins, we begin rebuilding our lives. Mine began with abandoning bad habits, unhealthy relationships, and old ways of seeing this land. More importantly, it required having a solid foundation or ‘rock’ which is the WORD of GOD. The WORD strengthens me in rebuilding a life that pleases GOD. *How can we serve our LORD if we fail to rebuild HIS temple in us?* – I Corinthians 3:16

GOD provides us refuge in Zion. A place where disciples gather to praise His Holy Name. Where happiness and joy flow freely with the Holy Spirit. Where the rebuilding effort finds fertile soil. Zion can be the start of something new, just have an open heart of love! Our LORD Jesus Christ sacrificed body and blood to be the rock on which we build. Are we ready to rebuild our community, our land, and our world?

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Our GOD wants to bless us if we simply confess our sins, rebuild our lives, and praise His Name! He encourages us to build communities of believers. These villages help us understand we are not alone. We are with GOD for He is in us!

## PRAYER

Father God, help me to release old habits and become new in you. I rebuild my life for you through Jesus Christ and will serve the Kingdom as my daily routine. Amen.



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# Day 15: iFollow

REV. WILLIAM SPENCER

“So he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.”

— Zechariah 4:6

I saw a movie recently and there was a scene that caught my attention. A father told his older daughter how he was going to make his much younger daughter do something he wanted her to do so he could demonstrate his force and power. His older daughter told him that he could do that or he could try a different approach and land the same outcome. Her argument was that the real power came in letting the younger daughter choose what she wanted to do.

That quick scene reminded me of a time I got in trouble (me? Go figure!) as a kid. I was walked home by another child’s folks and they told my mom what I had done. She. Was. Furious. After a long and stern talking to, she ended with the ubiquitous, “and wait until your dad gets home!” He came home and had a talk with me that I’ll never forget. The punishment for the rest of the summer that my mother doled out was rescinded but most importantly, the lesson was learned for good. I recall my dad’s words, but I mostly remember the way he talked to me.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Which way do you respond the best, with force or with love? I think God demonstrates God’s power by allowing us to choose. By God’s own Spirit, love, we are able to choose God and follow God’s ways the best we can. Isn’t that powerful?!

## PRAYER

Lord, we choose to follow you because of the love you show us daily. I pray, Lord, that we always choose you the same way you choose us. Amen.

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# Day 16: iAccept

REV. DENZEL GOODLIN

“The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel,[c] and he was limping because of his hip.”

— Genesis 32: 31

The time had approached for the lights to go out to sleep while staying at a friend's. The bedroom light was a lamp plugged into the wall. I flipped the lamp switch, but the light would not turn off. I attempted several other approaches but the light would not power down. I called this friend who was away to resolve the issue. He said the lamp is Bluetooth controlled. The only way to turn it off was to have my phone nearby. Thus, I had no choice but to sleep with a light on I could not control.

Life reminds us regardless of our best attempts, we are not in control. Despite new year's resolutions, expectations post-SEEK, we too will find ourselves in guest rooms illuminated with circumstances we can't expel. Like Jacob, we will fight with God and may prevail briefly, but end up injured. We will discern that we can't stop what we couldn't control to begin with. At some point we'll have to accept we can only do but so much.

So there I was forced to accept my vigil because of a light that would not stop shining. It was unpleasant, but the light wouldn't stop shining. It was difficult, but the light wouldn't stop beaming. The substance I couldn't control was the power that was keeping me. May acceptance empower us to see how we're still kept in spite of what we can't control, and by a light that never stops shining.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What are you afraid will happen when you release control to accept God's plan?

## PRAYER

Dear Lord, help me to accept your plan in moments when I go through experiences that are beyond my control.

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# Day 17: iReach: Going Higher In Christ

DEACON GERI TUCKER

“It’s not that I have already reached this goal or have already been perfected, but I pursue it, so that I may grab hold of it because Christ grabbed hold of me for just this purpose. Brothers and sisters, I myself don’t think I’ve reached it, but I do this one thing: I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. The goal I pursue is the prize of God’s upward call in Christ Jesus.”

– Philippians 3:12–14, CEB

Most of us take the act of reaching for granted in our daily lives. We reach for everyday items such as phones, keys, wallets, clothes, books, and food. We reach for goals, positions, and successes. We reach for children, parents, pets, and others that we love. How often do we reach for God and press toward the goal of growing closer to him and our calling to win the world for Christ? The hymn writer reminds us that the way to “reach the masses,” men and women of every birth, is to lift up Christ. If we reach for him, if we press toward the mark, He will certainly draw us close because His love reaches us everywhere.

The word for “press” in the Greek is *dioko* means to earnestly and continuously pursue.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

How can I reach that point in my  
relationship with Christ?

## PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for this time of corporate prayer  
and fasting and for the blessed assurance that you are  
always within my reach.

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# Day 18: iEndure

MINISTER OTIS BYRD, JR.

*“And let endurance complete its work, so that you may be complete and whole, lacking in nothing.”*

— James 1:4 NRSVUE

Years ago, in a temporary attempt to fulfill a New Year’s resolution, I began working with a personal trainer to instruct and guide me in my goal to tone and build muscle. He immediately advised me that we would not spend much time doing cardio but would have other foci. One of these was resistance training (RT). These exercises, he explained, would challenge my muscles in ways that simply walking would not. “You must move against more than air if you want your body to grow.” This truth necessitated the RT approach, which, though not comfortable or pleasant, was beneficial.

RT achieves the development of muscles through and under resistance. In this way, life’s trials develop us and our character in Christ. Difficult and complex circumstances often come, not to tear us down or take us out but to build and perfect us. For this reason, we may consider shifting our prayers from requesting the removal of our trials to asking for the strength to endure, or “remain under,” as the James text suggests. Why? So that we may be completed and made whole, lacking nothing. We are incomplete and underdeveloped without the strengthening that comes through enduring trials and resistance — its spiritual RT. As we pray and fast, may we see trials from a fresh perspective. May we see them not as antagonists to our purpose but embrace them as participants in our strength development and spiritual wholeness.

As we SEEK, consider your trials and resistances.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

What uncomfortable circumstances or heavy conditions is God calling on you to endure or remain under or be strengthened and perfected by? How might the promise of completeness and wholeness shift your perspective while enduring difficulties?

## PRAYER

God who is our strength, help us discern that which we must endure and grant us the tenacity to remain that we may be perfected by your process and grace. Amen.



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# Day 19: iBelieve

REV. MARCIA M. NORFLEET

“Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.”

— Mark 9:24, NKJV

The father in this passage speaks to Jesus about his mute demon-possessed son that causes the son to have seizures. Neither doctors nor the disciples could heal him and in the father’s doubt Jesus would also be impotent. The Savior chastises everyone for their lack of faith, which causes the father to cry out saying he believes but admittedly has doubts. In the midst of his crisis, the father continued to converse with Christ. Jesus heals the boy in front of his eyes and the faith of all the witnesses grew.

Crises of faith are more frequent than you think and it happens to the best of us. When my father passed away, which seemed sudden, I stood in the middle of my crisis and doubted the existence of God. After crying and pleading for his healing my prayers went unanswered and left me angry. However, even in my anger I continued to ask why. In my doubt that God existed, I continued to ask why. I found myself in the middle of belief and unbelief but even in the midst, I continued to speak to God. I believed in God’s existence enough to keep speaking even in anger. Later I realized that this was a prayer of lament.

I did not receive an answer to my question of why but God spoke to me and answered my prayer for healing. Even though it wasn’t on this side of heaven, my father received his healing after death which soothed my doubts. My faith continued to grow as I continued to speak with God. Looking back on this season of my life, I can say that it was the catalyst that gave me correction, changed my direction, and prompted me to truly dedicate my life to Christ.

Keep speaking. Keep praying. Keep fasting. God is listening and will answer.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Have you had a crisis of faith?  
If so, how did it change your life?

## PRAYER

Lord, may the mustard seed faith I have help others grow  
theirs into groves. Amen.

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# Day 20: iStand Are you willing to stand?

REV. DR. ROSLYN M. BROCK

*“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love.”*

– 1 Corinthians 16:13–14, NIV

In a world of shifting values, unexpected challenges, and mounting social and political pressures, these words from Paul are a rallying cry, offering guidance and encouragement for our spiritual journey.

*Stand firm in the faith* is about holding onto eternal truths of God’s word with courage and conviction, not just in thought but in how we live our lives each day. Our witness for God is more than vocal declarations or public gestures when it’s convenient, but a deep, personal commitment to authentically live the values we believe each day fortified by the Holy Spirit within us.

To stand for God means showing compassion and kindness to others, seeking justice and fairness in all our dealings, and upholding the inherent worth and dignity of every individual. It’s about being a beacon light of hope and love in a world that often seems overshadowed by despair, doubt, and division. Standing for God means to continually seek His presence, to immerse ourselves in His word, and to let His teachings mold our hearts and actions.

There is an inner peace and strength that comes from aligning our lives with God’s divine will. In moments of weariness or doubt, remember the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before, those who stood firm in their faith against all odds.

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Let us draw inspiration and courage from their wisdom stories as we trust in the unfailing love and guidance of an Almighty God. Take heart, beloved, that when we stand for God, we never stand alone!

## PRAYER

Lord, please help me stand firm in my faith. Fill me with strength and courage to guard against things that would lead me away from You. Amen.

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# Day 21: iTrust

REV. HEATHER L. TAYLOR

*“Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is a refuge for us.”*

— Psalms 62:8 NRSV

While some may review concordances to enhance their biblical understanding, occasionally there’s practical wisdom from the ready resource of Merriam-Webster. It defines “trust” as the “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something; one in which confidence is placed.”

In this simple definition, the Holy Spirit poses poignant questions as life’s challenges unravel, God’s promises tarry, and the fulfillment of our innermost desires remains a mystery: “Do you rely with assurance on God’s character? Do you rest in God’s ability, strength, and truth? Do you place your confidence in God amidst suffering? Beloved, do you indeed trust God?

Often, we depend on our own limited abilities and understanding, and pursue methods that invoke worldly wisdom to resolve matters. We may not foresee the resulting consequences and risk forfeiting the fullness of God’s blessings.

Classic biblical characters like Abraham and Sarah had similar struggles. God promised that Sarah, Abraham’s elderly barren wife, would give birth to a child. After years went by, Abraham impregnated Hagar, Sarah’s servant, instead of trusting God’s promise that was later fulfilled. This “situationship” escalated. Sarah became jealous, Hagar fled the scene and Ishmael, Hagar’s son, remained in conflict with his siblings.

God has infinite wisdom, resources, and power to fulfill promises and exceed our expectations when a sign or promise is nowhere in sight. We must pour out our heart and seek God for patience, strength, and direction. We may then take confidence that the outcome will be favorable even when God’s only instruction is “be still.”

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

How can you proactively put your trust in God? Begin to pour out your heart in your prayer notes and take refuge in our God.

## PRAYER

Dear God, help me put my trust in you despite the appearance of my circumstances and rest assured that, whatever the outcome, it will work in my favor. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

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# THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN SEEK 2024!

## CONGRATULATIONS

You've completed SEEK 2024. 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”

## 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”

## 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”





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