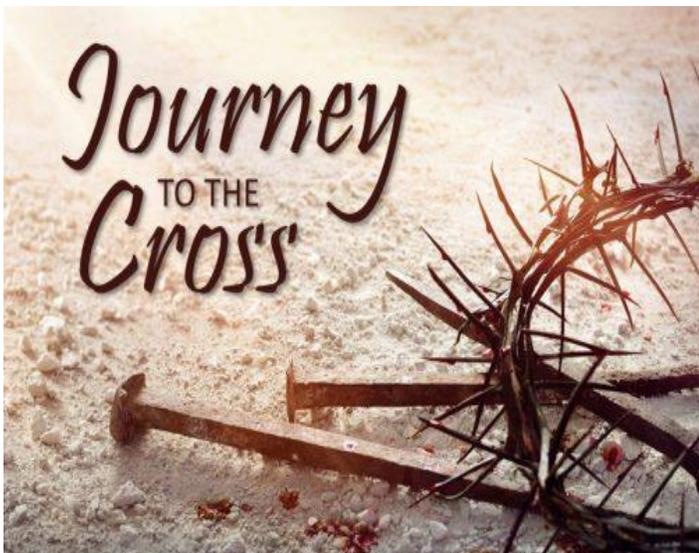


2026 Lenten Devotional



*The Carolina Region Board of
Evangelism and Missions*

“Journey to The Cross”

Our Regional Team

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Reverend Annette Mathis
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Dedication

This inaugural edition of the "Journey to the Cross" Lenten Devotional Journal is humbly and prayerfully dedicated to our Presiding Prelate, Bishop James B. Walker and Lady Delois Woody Walker.

As the visionary leader of the 7th Episcopal District, Bishop Walker has consistently called us to a higher standard of spiritual integrity and authentic faith. His leadership serves as the compass for this 40-day journey, guiding the Carolina Region—from the Charleston Columbia District to the Durham and Winston-Salem Greenville Districts—closer to the heart of God.

We dedicate this work to him in honor of his commitment to the Word that does not return void. It is through his guidance that we are encouraged to "tear our hearts and not our garments," seeking a transformation that is internal, sincere, and uncompromised.

Bishop, we thank you for leading the way toward the Cross. We stand with you as a region, refusing to accommodate the world, instead anchoring ourselves in the unstoppable promise of God's Word.

To God Be the Glory!

The Foreword

Welcome to the first-ever Carolina Region Board of Evangelism and Missions Lenten Devotional Journal. This historic publication represents a collective spiritual labor of love from across our three districts: the Charleston Columbia District, the Durham District, and the Winston-Salem Greenville District.

This 40-day journey ahead is designed to be more than a tradition; it is a call to avoid the subtle trap of compromise. Compromise often begins not as a total surrender, but as an "accommodation" of worldly ideals. This journal serves as a tool to help us refuse those accommodations and instead anchor ourselves in the Word of God. We move forward knowing that the Word is like the "rain" in our lives—once released, it cannot be "un-rained," and it will not return void.

As we begin this holy season on Ash Wednesday, February 18th, we are honored to be led by our Presiding Prelate of the 7th Episcopal District, Bishop James B. Walker, alongside our dedicated Presiding Elders: Rev. Jetson R. Maness, Rev. Clifton C. Harris, and Rev. Faye R. Houston.

Here is the Layout:

- **Day #1:** (Ash Wednesday) Joel 2:12-13 Bishop James B. Walker start our journey. Focusing on "Tearing the Heart, Not the Garment" to set a tone of authentic repentance.
- **Day #2:** Matthew 6:1-4 Presiding Elder Jetson R. Maness leads on, emphasizing "The Secret Place of Sacrifice" and the virtue of spiritual discipline.
- **Day #3:** Friday 2 Corinthians 5:17 Presiding Elder Clifton C. Harris continues, presenting "The New Creation Mandate" to remind us of our identity in Christ.
- **Day #4:** Saturday, February 21st Romans 12:1. Presiding Elder Faye R. Houston concludes our opening days, with focusing on "The Living and Holy Offering" as an act of disciplined dedication.

Following these foundational days, each week of this 40-day journey you will explore specific Weekly Focus Themes with devotions, action steps, and prayers provided by the Young Adults and Adults representing both lay and clergy of the Carolina Region:

- Week 1: "Renewing Our Minds"
- Week 2: "The Importance of Prayer"
- Week 3: "The Cost of Discipleship"
- Week 4: "Embracing Simplicity"
- Week 5: "Practicing Forgiveness"
- Week 6: "Jesus' Passion and Death"

As you engage with these pages throughout this 40-day journey, remember that the enemy survives on strategic interruptions. These are not mere accidents; they are calculated attempts to steal your joy and kill the hope you are cultivating. However, we must remain steadfast, knowing that the Word of God is strictly outcome-oriented. It does not get bogged down in your current struggles, but instead focuses with laser precision on your "planned state"—the destination God has already established for you.

It is my fervent prayer that this devotional journal serves as more than just a daily reading, but as a divine catalyst for a total spiritual transformation. As we embark on this journey, I pray that your spirit remains steadfast and your heart remains unyielding to the pressures of the world. May this time sharpen your spiritual discernment, allowing you to distinguish between the temporary noise of life's interruptions and the eternal weight of God's unstoppable Word. As we walk together as a region toward the foot of the Cross, may you find that your life has become a living sacrifice—holy, acceptable, and fully aligned with the prosperous purpose for which you were created.

In His Service,

Rev. Angela D. Dix,

Director of Evangelism and Missions
The Carolina Region Board of Evangelism and Missions

Let the Journey Begin

Ash Wednesday | February 18, 2026
Bishop James B. Walker
Presiding Prelate

"TEARING THE HEART, NOT THE GARMENT"

Scripture: (Joel 2:12-13 NIV)

¹²"Even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." ¹³Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

THE DEVOTIONAL

Clothes in Joel's day, the rich wore fine cloth dyed in brilliant colors. The poor wore dull garments of coarse wool. Enslaved persons wore short, knee length apparel. The intellectuals wore long flowing robes, totally inappropriate for manual labor. In Joel's world, clothing spoke volumes. So it was natural for him to speak about clothing and repentance. For Joel the big issue was "The Locust Plague." 80 billion locusts was the size of the plague. They ate 4000 tons of vegetation per day (that is equal to eating the weight of 700 elephants per day in vegetation). They covered everything, as if it was a snow covering and when they finished no vegetation was left, they even ate the bark from trees, invaded homes, polluted the water, and the wells, they covered men, women and children, even livestock and pets. Judah experienced hell on earth. So, Joel probably saw torn garments by the thousands. Everywhere he looked people were rending garments, but true religion, true repentance was not taking place. I say this not because Joel stated people were not doing A, B or C. We do not find accusations in the text other than drunkenness. However, we must ask why would you need to tell people who lived through such an experience to fast, to mourn, to pray, to call a solemn assembly? Why was this not being done? Why did the priests need to be told to pray and fast? My guess is that even after going through this catastrophe, there

was still an externally serious faith, but not internally. So think about the church and political leaders in the United States. How are we different than Judah on the issue of immigration? What are we doing differently as relates to the decline of church membership. Do we mourn from the heart the fact that more and more people see Christianity as nonviable? What is the appropriate response for living in a country that throws away 20% of its edible food because of inconsistent policy on date labeling. "Sell By" is not "Expires On," and "Use By" is not "Best If Used Before." Yet millions go to bed hungry while landfills are overflowing with perfectly good food. At this moment, we have the freedom to vote, and we have a reason to do so, yet many of us refuse to exercise the right. So, like Judah, we wear the torn garments, but we should rend our hearts. Joel 2:12–13 teaches that, in response to personal loss or national tragedy, such as the one Joel writes about, people ripped their garments as a visible sign of grief. Therefore, in Judah, where Joel prophesied, thousands of Judeans wore ripped garments because of the catastrophic famine. Throughout all Judea, rich and poor, enslaved and intellectuals, all wore torn garments, the exterior sign of mourning. But Joel noticed the mourning only reached the tear in their garments. Drunkenness was prevalent, offerings cut off, and spiritual complacency were common. Many garments were torn, but leaders were unbothered, faith was lax, and worship was neglected. Joel called out the nation's superficial grief and demanded true repentance, the kind that comes from the heart. "People look at outward appearances, looks at the heart." God desired the rending of the heart, because it is the heart that God watches. Ripping beautiful garments was symbolic, but these torn garments did not speak for the hearts of the people. Scripture says God knows the heart, weighs the heart, searches the heart, looks on the heart, and tests the heart. So, when we rend our heart, we open our true self for God to see. In rending the heart, we show God what God is in search of, and we reveal what God is watching. Rending the heart means we do not make an offering, but we become the offering, and our life becomes the gift. During this Lenten season, rend your heart, not your garment.

REFLECTIONS

Rend your heart daily. Pray, don't perform. Old Testament believers mourned, can you? What role does repentance play in your prayer life? Make it bigger. Remember, God watches hearts.

Action Steps

Pray for a true heart. Fast for a faithful heart. Rest, do nothing for 2 hours to clear the mind. Find a worship partner, sing, pray, keep each other accountable.

Prayer

Gracious Lord, you know our heart and you see our torn garments. Search us, and make us right, so that we align externally and internally, garment and heart. Replace pride with purpose, take complacency and give us diligence, put passion back in our worship, and forgive us that we may begin again. Teach us to become the offering that you deserve. During and after this season may we rend our hearts, not our garments. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Thursday | February 19, 2026

Rev. Jetson R. Maness Presiding Elder
Charleston Columbia District

"THE SECRET PLACE"

Scripture: (Matthew 6:1- 4 NIV)

¹Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. ²So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

THE DEVOTIONAL

Growing up, my family home had a secret place/private place for prayer and meditation? It was always at the breakfast table. Before anyone would take a bit, each of us had to recite a Bible verse from memory, and then Prayer would be said. Yes, we children learned later, how valuable that secret/private place became, in our spiritual growth? In this scripture text, Jesus teaches us the difference between a secret place and public place. Our secret place is Our attitude about fasting, praying, and giving without seeking personal recognition nor self-glory. Jesus teaches that heaven honors righteousness but rejects self-glorification or self-centeredness. So, from mom and daddy kitchen table, I learned that spiritual

scriptures, meditation and prayer can and will help shape our secret place and attitude about God. Publicly, our reward can be earthly and flashy, if we are not allowing our attitude to be God centered.

REFLECTIONS

How can I deepen my spiritual growth or continue spiritually maturing during this Lenten Season? Take time out of your day to reflect on: Fasting, Meditating, and praying for self.

ACTION STEPS

Take 15 minutes a day to read the word of God. Write down questions from the scripture and meditate on those questions and the scripture throughout the day.

PRAYER

God who sees all and knows all, thank you for another chance to grow our righteous relationship with you. Help us your children, find our secret place or private place, where our relationship with you will continue to blossom and mature in the faith of the kingdom of God. Amen.

Friday | February 20, 2026

Rev. Clifton E. Harris | Presiding Elder
Durham District

“A NEW CREATURE MANDATE”

Scripture: (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV)

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

THE DEVOTIONAL

Paul's rigorous training in the Torah prepared him to be a zealous defender of Judaism before his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus shows how his old self (focused on the worldly law and earthly standards) died with Christ, leading to a new Christ-Centered perspective and purpose as a new creation. Before Paul could be fully converted, he had to be in Christ. He had to be a follower of Christ. He had to experience God for himself. He had to be blinded by God in order to follow God, and he remained blind for 3 days. Ananias, the man that Saul was out to kill, had a conversation with God. He was instructed to go to the House of Judas on Straight Street and ask for Saul. Ananias informed God about the report that was out about this man and all the harm he had done to God's holy people in Jerusalem. God told Ananias to go

because Paul was his chosen instrument to proclaim His name to the Gentiles, their kings, and the people of Israel. God also said He would show Paul how much he would suffer for His name. When Ananias placed his hands on Paul's eyes and told him that he was sent by God so that he could regain his sight AND be filled with the Holy Spirit. The scales fell from Paul's eyes. He received new sight; he couldn't see things the old way anymore.

REFLECTIONS

The new creation was not just self-improvement but a supernatural, divine act creating a fundamentally new person with a new nature, identity, and purpose.

ACTION STEPS

You must be a believer in Christ. You must be willing to give up the old you. You must follow Christ. You must go and make disciples.

PRAYER

Use this song by Olivia Branch Walker and pray a prayer of thanksgiving: "I moved from my old house, I moved from my old friends, I moved from my old way of strife, thank God I moved out to a brand-new life. Can't you see I'm a new man, don't you know I got a new name, and one day I'll live in that new land, because I moved out to a brand-new life." Amen.

Saturday | February 21, 2026

Rev. Faye R. Houston | Presiding Elder
Winston-Salem Greenville District

“The Living and Holy Offering”

Scripture (Romans 12:1 NRSVUE)

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship."

THE DEVOTIONAL

Worship is more than what happens when we gather with the church. Worship is a daily presenting of ourselves in submission before God. The Christian life is summed up in the admonition that we present our "bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." This is our worship; an offering, a presenting of ourselves on a day by day, moment by moment basis. Everything we think, do, desire, want, and speak. Here's our life, Lord. Here's our worship. Our plans, our dreams,

our ambitions, our budget, our possessions - everything is yours. Only when that is the case, does our life become an act of worship. Understand, we're talking about our whole being. Which means the different roles, responsibilities, and resources that make you...you. For me, it looks like the following: I'm an aunt, great-mama, friend, pastor, teacher, small group leader, a mentor, and a protégé. These are just a few of the different roles that make me... me. And I offer it all to God as a "living sacrifice" Everything I do in all the different capacities of my life is to be done for His Glory. Such devotion means we refuse to be conformed to the patterns of this world; for if we love what the world loves, we cannot love what our Father loves. Let my life – let your life become a life of worship!

REFLECTIONS

- What is a barrier to you living this kind of life?
- Think about who you are; identify the different things that make you who you are.

ACTION STEPS

- Be still and examine yourself daily concerning your worship practices.
- Pray and ask God to give you the grace and mercy to live for Him.

PRAYER

Lord, we're tired of lacking purpose and peace - of conforming to the patterns of this world. We want our lives to be a pleasing sacrifice to you - for we know a life that is pleasing to you will be a life that is good for us. In Jesus name, Amen.

Week#1

The Winston-Salem Greenville District
Weekly Theme: "Renewing Our Minds"

Monday February 23, 2026

Rev. Angela D. Dix

SCRIPTURE: 2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT)

⁷ "For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."

THE DEVOTIONAL "You Got the Power!"

We often treat our thoughts like uninvited guests. Fear is rarely quiet because it relies on noise to distract you from truth. Yes fear, is that loud annoying neighbor who knocks on the door of our minds, and we then begin letting worry or those

"what-ifs" come in and take up permanent residence in our heads. Fear will tell us we aren't enough, that the future is bleak, or that we should shrink back to stay safe. But Paul's letter to Timothy reminds us that fear isn't just a "feeling"—it's a spirit, and it's one that does not come from God! Paul's letter to Timothy reminds us that a cluttered, fearful mind isn't our natural inheritance. God never planned that for us. To renew your mind is to actively swap the "spirit of fear" for the "sound mind" God has already placed within you. It is the daily practice of aligning your internal monologue with His eternal truth. Therefore, let's start with taking "spiritual inventory." If a thought produces paralysis or dread, it didn't come from God. Dread is, by definition, a loss of control. Dread offers no exit strategy; it only offers a "spirit of fear," which is the mind spinning its wheels in the mud of the future. However, God has provided a "holy toolkit," that acts as a barrier against this intrusive neighbor. Think of it as the "deadbolt lock" on your door with a three-fold attribute for you to activate: Power: Not just physical strength, but the inner resilience to face challenges. This isn't about worldly status or brute force. It is Dunamis—the inherent ability and strength to overcome obstacles. You have the "battery pack" of the Divine wired into your daily life. Remember, any thought that forces you to live in a terrifying, imagined future is pulling you away from His presence and the "daily bread" of His grace. That's why when the Spirit of God points something out, it comes with the power to fix it. Therefore, as we look at the character of God, we are reminded that His corrections are meant to lead us to restoration, not devastation.

REFLECTIONS

Next time you feel that heavy sense of dread, treat it like a "Check Engine" light. It is a signal that you are currently believing a lie about your future or your identity. Renewal happens when you stop arguing with the dread but instead replace it with the **power** of God's word, the **love** of His character, and the **sobriety** of a sound mind. It is the daily practice of aligning your internal monologue with His eternal truth.

ACTION STEPS

To renew your mind is to actively swap the "spirit of fear" for the "sound mind" God has already placed within you. You must become a "gatekeeper" of your thoughts. Ask yourself:

- Does this dreadful thought leave room for God's sovereignty? No, you can tell it, "You don't belong here."

- Is this thought "noise?" Dread is loud, chaotic, and demanding. God's voice is often described as a "still, small voice" (a gentle whisper).
- If a thought makes you feel weak, unloved, and irrational, you can safely conclude it is a "fiery dart" from the enemy rather than a Divine insight from God. Now use your "sound mind" to anchor yourself in what is true and **Put it OUT!**

PRAYER

Father, thank You for not leaving me to my own anxieties. Today, I claim the sound mind You have given me. Help me to filter my thoughts through Your love and power, renewing my perspective one breath at a time. In Jesus' Amen.

Tuesday February 24, 2026

Charles Scott

SCRIPTURE:1 Corinthians 2:16 (NIV)

"For, 'Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ."

THE DEVOTIONAL "Having the Mind of Christ"

As I reflect back growing up in the late 1960s/early 1970's there was a television commercial for the United Negro college fund and its main theme was "A mind is a terrible thing to waste". Additionally, as I look back over my life thinking back to my 107 year old great grandma Jennie V. Williams she would often say as she stood up in church I am glad that I am in my right mind and finally being the sports fanatic that I am several of my coaches would often tell the team we have to get into their head or affect their mindset to gain control of the game. Even as the devil today tries to affect and distract our minds, we can revert back to today's scripture 1Corinthians 2:16 "for who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him but we have the mind of Christ". In this way if we don't get distracted and keep our minds focused on the Lord he has promised us in II Timothy 1:7" that he has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, and love and of a sound mind". It is simple, in this season of lent let us not get caught up with cares of this evil world making us loose our minds but lean on Philippians 2:5 "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Think on these things you have already won; the devil is defeated.

REFLECTIONS

Guard your mind, body and soul asking the Lord to help you each day to be and think more like him.

ACTION STEPS

In making decisions on everyday life matters pray and ask God to guide your mind to the make the right and wise choice

PRAYER

God of power, wisdom & goodness we pray that you help us to have the mind of Christ in our everyday trials & tribulations. WWJD (What would Jesus Do). We will not fear for we have sound doctrine that can only come from you. Amen.

Wednesday February 25, 2026

Rev. Gary McDaniel

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

"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."

THE DEVOTIONAL "Give it to God"

The apostle Paul while in prison wrote a letter to the Christian Church in Philippians urges believers to replace anxiety with prayer, instructing us to "Give it to God" through petition and thanksgiving by surrendering worries to Him, we actively renew our minds, allowing God's peace which surpasses all understanding transforming our focus from problems to His Power by releasing control and trusting Him, we trade worry from a divine peace that transcends understanding, guarding our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ. Paul was writing this letter from prison to encourage the Philippians church to trust God despite external difficulties. In arching to today's time 2026. Philippians 4:6-7 offers the same message a transformative approach, navigating life stress, uneasiness, overwhelming troubles and anxiety's by replacing worrying with intentional prayer and gratitude. The hermeneutical arch of our time encourages believers to actively surrender habits, fear and burdens to God, resulting in a divine guarding your mind and peace that transcends uncertain circumstances as a spiritual strategy to combat anxiety about the future or the chaos of life, by fostering genuine consistent connection with God through daily reliance and trust rather than just habits.

REFLECTIONS

Deepening your prayer life this Lent season involves moving beyond routine to intentional, consistent, and conversational connection with

God, include setting a specific time and place for God use.

ACTION STEPS

Building intimacy with the Father by combining prayer, fasting and sacrificing our time to intensify our focus and spiritual connection to God by reading scriptures and praying 10-15 minutes daily.

PRAYER

Father, as I enter this sacred season of lent, I come before you with a humble heart asking you to create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. Search me and reveal the ways I have turned from you. In kindness, lead me and guide me to true repentance, that I may return to you with sincerity and love. Strengthen me to do your will and to walk this Lenten Journey. In Jesus name. Amen.

Thursday February 26, 2026

Dr. Joseph Fox

SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:6 (NIV)

“The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.”

THE DEVOTIONAL “Allow God’s Spirit to

govern your mind” While Martha was distracted by many tasks, Mary chose to sit at Jesus’ feet and listen. Jesus affirmed that Mary had chosen what truly brings peace. Showing how a Spirit-focused mind restores balance, clarity, and spiritual vitality. Renewing our minds begins with recognizing who or what is in control of our thoughts and actions. When our minds are governed by the flesh, we are led by fear, unhealthy desires, past hurts, and worldly thinking. We continue to let this negative baggage govern our lives. This mindset drains our spiritual vitality and robs us of peace. We experience negative relationships, undue stress, and depression. The Spirit helps us discern what aligns with God’s will and what needs to be released. We begin to pray by first thanking God for all of His blessings and everything that He is doing in our lives before asking for His continued blessings. As our thinking shifts, so does our living. A Spirit-governed mind produces life, peace, and a deeper connection with God. Renewing the mind is not a one-time event; it is a daily discipline of surrender and trust. Renewing the mind is not a one-time event. It is a daily discipline of surrender and trust in God!

REFLECTIONS

Renewing the mind means daily surrender, releasing fear and old wounds, choosing Spirit-led thinking that aligns with God’s will, nurtures gratitude, restores peace, and transforms how we live and love.

ACTION STEPS

Pause and Pray Daily Examine Your Thoughts
Replace with Scripture Practice Mindful Obedience
Reflect Each Evening.

PRAYER

Lord, I thank you for the many blessings that you have given me and the things that you continue to do in my life. Renew my mind. I surrender my thoughts to Your Spirit. Help me release every flesh mindset and walk in the life and peace You promise. Amen.

Friday February 27, 2026

Rev. Nathaniel Poole

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV)

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

THE DEVOTIONAL “It All Makes Sense to God”

Never second-guess God, for His thoughts and ways are far beyond our limited understanding. Scripture reminds us in Isaiah 55:8–9, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.” God does not think or act as we do. His perspective is eternal; ours is temporary. Sometimes we may feel that God is not fair. Yet fairness, as we define it, is not the measure of His character. God is perfectly just and always does what is right according to His holy and righteous standards. He does not show favoritism, nor can He be influenced or bribed. No one placed Him in authority, and no one can remove Him. He judges rightly, weighing not only actions but also the intentions of the heart. Because He is holy, He cannot tolerate sin. Yet alongside His justice stands His great mercy. In Psalms 103:10–14, we are reminded that He does not treat us as our sins deserve. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions. Like a compassionate

father, the Lord has mercy on His children, remembering that we are dust. God is not limited as we are. He is just, holy, and merciful—and His ways are always best.

REFLECTIONS

When life feels unfair, will I trust God's higher wisdom over my limited view, resting in His perfect justice and mercy, believing His ways are always loving and right?

ACTION STEPS

Knowing His will begins with knowing His character: Study His Word, Pray for Wisdom, Obey the Word of God, Seek Godly Counsel and Watch for the Fruit of Peace that aligns to God's Word.

PRAYER

Heavenly father, I come before you to ask for a renewed mind. I ask that you transform me from the inside out. Replace the worldly thoughts with your word, according to Psalms 51:10, that says "Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew the right spirit in me". This I ask in Jesus' name, Amen!

Saturday February 28, 2026

Jamesha K. Thomas

SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)

"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

THE DEVOTIONAL: "Submit Your Thoughts to Jesus"

Our theme, "Renewing Our Minds," speaks directly to the battlefield most of us fight on every single day — our thoughts. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul tells us that we demolish arguments and take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. That means not every thought that enters your mind belongs there. Not every thought is from God. Some thoughts are rooted in fear, insecurity, past failures, or the enemy trying to remind you of who you used to be. Renewing our minds means we don't just let thoughts sit there unchecked. We examine them, challenge them, and replace them with truth. When the thought says, "I'm not good enough," God's word says, "You are fearfully and wonderfully made." When the thought says, "I'll never change," God says, "If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation." When the thought says, "God forgot about me," Scripture says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Renewal is not a one-time event — it's a daily decision. Every day we

choose whether we will let our minds be led by feelings, culture, and negativity, or by the truth of God's word. Taking thoughts captive is like arresting lies and releasing truth. And when our minds are renewed, our attitudes change, our faith grows, and our lives begin to reflect Christ more clearly. A renewed mind leads to a transformed life.

REFLECTIONS

During this Lenten season, deepen prayer by surrendering your thoughts daily, replacing worry with God's word, listening more than speaking, and inviting Christ to reshape your mind, heart, and responses.

ACTION STEPS

Start each day with Scripture. Pause to challenge negative thoughts and replace them. Fast from mental clutter. Speak God's promises aloud. End with reflection. Fill your mind with worship daily.

PRAYER

Father God, Thank You for your word guiding our lives and thoughts. We confess our minds hold worry, doubt, and fear. Help us renew our minds, take thoughts captive, and measure them by your truth. Remind us who we are in you. Replace anxiety with peace, doubt with faith, and fear with confidence. Fix our minds on what honors you and transform us from the inside out. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Monday March 2, 2026

Courtney D. Dowdy

SCRIPTURE: Luke 18:1-8 (NIV)

"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' ⁴ "For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!' ⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge

says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

THE DEVOTIONAL "Stay Prayed Up"

The Gospel of Luke gives us a close and personal look at Jesus' life, His ministry, His death, and His resurrection. Luke writes in a way that reveals Jesus as the Savior for everyone, both Jews and Gentiles. He teaches His followers to walk in humility and faith, reminding us that salvation is available to all and that prayer should stay at the center of our relationship with God. Jesus often used parables, simple, everyday stories with deeper spiritual meaning to help people understand the Kingdom of God. In Luke 18, the parable of the persistent widow teaches us to keep praying and trust that God is just. Through these stories, Jesus invites us to see ourselves in the lesson and respond with faith. Prayer isn't just for church on Sunday or moments of crisis. Jesus tells us clearly in Luke 18:1, "Always pray and don't give up." Prayer is our lifeline, our direct connection to the God who holds everything together. The widow in Jesus' story didn't stop coming to the judge. She kept showing up, and eventually, she received justice. If persistence moves an unjust judge, how much more will our loving Father respond to His children? So don't give up! When you've prayed for that healing, that breakthrough, that peace, and it feels like nothing's happening, keep praying! Keep knocking! Keep believing! Because Jesus promises in verse 7 that God will bring justice for His chosen ones who cry out to Him day and night!

REFLECTIONS

Where in my life do I need to be more persistent in prayer, and how can I trust God's timing instead of my own?

ACTION STEPS

Choose persistence today. Pray boldly, trust God's timing, & refuse to quit. Bring your needs to Him daily, stay faithful in the waiting, and believe He is working on your behalf.

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for reminding me that prayer has power. Forgive me when I grow weary. Strengthen my faith as I wait on Your perfect timing. Help me pray with persistence and trust. Fill me with peace

and let my prayers draw me closer to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tuesday March 3, 2026

Rev. Nikki S. Spencer

SCRIPTURE: Luke 18:1-8 (MSG)

"¹⁻³ Jesus told them a story showing that it was necessary for them to pray consistently and never quit. He said, "There was once a judge in some city who never gave God a thought and cared nothing for people. A widow in that city kept after him: 'My rights are being violated. Protect me!' ⁴⁻⁵ "He never gave her the time of day. But after this went on and on he said to himself, 'I care nothing what God thinks, even less what people think. But because this widow won't quit badgering me, I'd better do something and see that she gets justice—otherwise I'm going to end up beaten black-and-blue by her pounding.'" ⁶⁻⁸ Then the Master said, "Do you hear what that judge, corrupt as he is, is saying? So what makes you think God won't step in and work justice for his chosen people, who continue to cry out for help? Won't he stick up for them? I assure you, he will. He will not drag his feet. But how much of that kind of persistent faith will the Son of Man find on the earth when he returns?"

THE DEVOTIONAL: "Keep Showing Up"

Jesus tells this story for one clear reason: so, we don't give up on prayer. And if we're honest, giving up can feel tempting, especially when life feels stacked against us. God can feel quiet. The widow in this story isn't powerful or connected. She doesn't have influence or money, just persistence. She keeps showing up, asking for justice, refusing to be ignored. Not because the system is fair, but because she believes her voice still matters. That's real life for a lot of us. We pray, we hope, and we wait, sometimes wondering if anything is actually changing. Jesus uses this story to remind us that prayer isn't about instant results; it's about staying connected to God when answers are delayed. Persistence doesn't mean God is hard to reach. It means faith keeps showing up even when life is hard. Lent invites us to sit with that tension. To keep praying when things don't move fast. To keep trusting when progress feels slow. And to believe that God cares deeply about justice, healing, and our future, more than any unfair system ever could. Jesus ends with a challenging question: Will there be faith when I return? In other words, will we still believe, still pray, still hope when it's easier to quit? This Lent, faith looks like showing up anyway. Praying anyway. Trusting anyway. Because God hears you and your persistence is not wasted.

REFLECTIONS

Let waiting become worship.

ACTION STEPS

When answers don't come, shift your prayer from asking to trusting.

PRAYER

God, although I don't see it, I trust You with the timing.

Wednesday March 4, 2026

Rev. Fredrick W. Peguess

SCRIPTURE: Luke 18:1-8 (NIV)

"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' ⁴ "For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!' ⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

THE DEVOTIONAL: "Don't Give Up!"

The Lord has a desire for us to continually depend upon Him and his ability to meet our every need. Whether He meets that need in a supernatural (or a way we cannot explain) or in a physical manner by using people that cross our paths. The widow woman approached the judge seeking justice. In spite of his non-beliefs, her persistency got the best of him and he granted her wish. It is with this same persistency that the Lord wants to feed us daily. In spite of the times in our lives when we feel unworthy or distant from Him, He is never distant from us or view us as a bother. He cherishes our conversations with Him as much or more that we. He wants us to be dependent upon Him in every aspect of our lives and rewards us accordingly. It is in our desperate and hard times that we will pour our hearts out to Him for it truly is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. If it is possible for a non-believing judge to have a heart

to provide for the widow woman, how much more would a gracious, merciful and forgiving God make room for our provision as well as our justice.

REFLECTIONS

In this Lenten season we should be intentional in our desire to spend time with God and remind Him of the promises that He has made to us.

ACTION STEPS

Make time for Him prior to the hectic rush of the day gets started. You will find that this intentional time will produce a great reward.

PRAYER

Lord, I pray for the man, woman, or child that is reading this right now. My prayer is that in their intentional time that they will open their heart to you and begin a habitual relationship with you. Allow them to understand your plans and your thoughts toward them. Amen.

Thursday March 5, 2026

Shekente KeYatta Lassiter-Farrington

SCRIPTURE: Luke 18:1-8 (NIV)

"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' ⁴ "For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!' ⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

THE DEVOTIONAL: "Have a Little Talk"

Let's breakdown this parable Jesus told. All judges, during that time, were expected to be impartial, righteously judge others, and understand that judgment truly belongs to God. In this parable, the judge is the complete opposite. Additionally, during that time, widows were entitled to special protection under the justice system. This widow was not given that protection and was disregarded until she

became so bothersome that the judge answered her plea. She was faithful in what she needed, which was justice, and after all that tarrying, day and night, her requests were answered. We, as true disciples and followers of Christ, need to pray persistently for the things we want. God is expecting this of us. But as we all know, distractions can come and put a halt to our praying. Internal distractions that can hinder us from praying are having a to-do list, tiredness, pride, worldly attachments, lack of faith, not knowing how to pray, and wandering thoughts. Some external factors that hinder us from praying are noisy environments, social media, electronics, and physical discomfort. Maybe you don't know how to pray, that's ok. Praying is just having a conversation with God. What we must understand is that God acts on His time, not ours. He hears our fervent prayers, and He will answer them when the time is right for Him. So, pray and know that God hears you and will answer!

REFLECTIONS

A way to deepen your prayer life this Lenten is by being intentional and persistent in prayer. Pray when you feel like it and when you don't. He will answer.

ACTION STEPS

Find a secret place so you can center yourself and pray with intention. Pick a time when you know you won't be distracted. Praying is like conversation, let it flow.

PRAYER

Lord, teach us to pray without ceasing, trusting that you hear us and will answer our prayers. Help us to pray day in and day out until our prayers are answered. And once the prayers are answered, help us to continue praying. In Jesus mighty name, we pray, Amen.

Friday March 6, 2026

Rev. Dr. Frederick J. Hicks

SCRIPTURE: Luke 18:1-8 (NIV)

"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' ⁴ "For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me,

I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!" ⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

THE DEVOTIONAL: "Pest or Persistent?"

As nicely as it can be said, the woman in the parable that Jesus told was a pest. Being seen as a pest is considered a negative trait. Whereas being persistent is considered a positive attribute. Depending on your goal, both can mean being determined. The woman wanted justice, and she was going to annoy and not stop until she received justice. Whether being persistent or a pest, the woman received justice. We can take pointers from this woman today about how to gain justice and change people's hearts. Be persistent or a pest until change happens. This was Jesus' point to his disciples about prayer. Have faith to pray persistently. Have faith to pray without ceasing. Even when faced with time and setbacks, have faith to keep praying. It takes faith to pray, pray until something happens, and then pray some more. Persistent prayer causes us to come closer with God. As we talk with God and listen to God, our relationship with God grows, as does our faith in God. No longer are we worrying about being an annoyance or bothering God. God loves hearing from us, so we cannot be a bothersome or a pest. God spoke through the prophet Isaiah, "Before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear." God's ear is ready to hear from us. Have faith that God already knows and has answers our prayers, even before we have said a word. So, why not persistently pray?

REFLECTIONS

During Lent, yourself to step out on faith and pray persistently. Be pray unceasingly. Prayer changes things. When we pray, things change. When we are persistent in prayer, we change.

ACTION STEPS

1. Have faith to pray persistently and unceasingly.
2. Pray often. Do not let the time, people or circumstances stop you from praying.
3. Keep Praying Until Something Happens. PUSH.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I am not sure what I am saying in my prayer, but I persist anyway. The words do not come out right, but I pray anyway. I thank you for

hearing and always answering my prayers, even when I do not see the answer. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

Saturday March 7, 2026

Rev. Dr. William Peguess

SCRIPTURE: Luke 18:1-8 (NIV)

“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ ⁴ “For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’ ⁶ And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

THE DEVOTIONAL: “A Redemptive Process”

Prayer is essential for sustaining faith, especially in seasons of delay and discouragement. Jesus introduces the parable of the persistent widow with a clear purpose: believers should “always pray and not lose heart.” Prayer is not optional for the follower of Christ; it is the means by which hope is maintained when circumstances seem unjust or unanswered. The widow in the parable represents powerlessness. She has no influence, status, or resources—only persistence. Her continual appeal to an unjust judge demonstrates that prayer is an act of faithful endurance. Jesus’ argument moves from lesser to greater: if an unjust judge responds merely to avoid being worn down, how much more will a just and loving God respond to the cries of His people. God is not reluctant, indifferent, or corrupt; He is righteous and attentive. This passage also reveals that delay in answered prayer is not evidence of God’s neglect but part of His redemptive process. Persistent prayer develops trust, strengthens faith, and aligns the believer’s heart with God’s purposes. God’s timing is intentional, and His justice is certain, even when it appears slow. Jesus concludes with a searching question: “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” Persistent prayer becomes the measure of genuine faith. To continue praying is to affirm confidence in God’s character despite unanswered questions. Luke 18:1–8 ultimately

teaches that prayer keeps believers grounded in faith, resilient in hope, and confident that God hears, cares, and will act in His perfect time.

REFLECTIONS

Deepen prayer this Lenten season by slowing down, seeking God daily, embracing silence, fasting distractions, listening before speaking, and trusting God’s presence beyond immediate answers.

ACTION STEPS

Set a daily prayer time, choose a quiet place, fast one distraction, pray Scripture, journal reflections, pray consistently even when answers seem delayed, and remain faithful throughout Lent.

PRAYER

Gracious God, draw us closer to You this Lenten season. Teach us to seek You faithfully, listen attentively, and trust Your timing. Renew our hearts through prayer. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Week#3:

The Charleston Columbia District
Weekly Theme: “The Cost of Discipleship”

Monday March 9, 2026

Rev. Juliana Hosey

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 28:19-20 (KJV)

“¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

THE DEVOTIONAL: “Discipleship Through Prayer”

Discipleship means being a dedicated follower and learner of a teacher, especially, committed to imitating their life, embodying their values, and spreading a lifelong journey of spiritual growth, obedience and helping others grow in faith. For discipleship to happen, one must be willing to follow, learn, transform and be obedience. Be willing to make a conscious decision to believe in and commit to the teachings of Jesus. Be active in the mission or work of Jesus. **SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 28: 19-20 Go and teach; Luke 9:23 Deny yourself; Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses... Nothing cannot happen without prayer. Prayer is a solemn request for help or

expression of thanks addressed to God or an of worship. A way of communicating with God. Prayer is not to change circumstances necessary but to change us!! We pray for deeper connection with God, guidance in decisions, strength against temptation, to express gratitude and confess sins. In prayer we draw closer to God to become disciples of His. **SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 28: 19-20 Pray that God will give you boldness to go, trusting in His promise to be with you always. Luke 9:23 Ask for strength to deny self, and follow Jesus, even when it's difficult. John 8: 31-32 Pray to God for a deep commitment to Christ's teachings, so you remain in Him and bear lasting fruit. Romans 8:29 Ask God to conform you. Follow Jesus.

REFLECTIONS

I can strengthen my prayer life through this Lenten Season by Fasting, Praying, Reading the Scriptures and Singing Praises unto God, so I may draw closer to God.

ACTION STEPS

1. Pray without ceasing 2. Read the Word 3. Follow God's instructions 4. Fast for guidance

PRAYER

Dear God, Help me to become the disciple you want me to be so that I may help to make more disciples for you. Keep me stay the course for you. Lord let my light shine so others can see your work and not mines. Amen.

Tuesday March 10, 2026

Rev. Billy R. Thompson

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 16:24-26 (NIV)

“24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”

THE DEVOTIONAL “All in or All Out!”

On September 2026, the MAGA world lost one of their most prominent figures due to assassination. He was among some that had a hand in his Party reclaiming all branches of government. Although his views and rhetoric were different and outrageous to some, we could agree that no one should lose their lives because of their beliefs. But on a second note, he spent the very last second of

his being doing what he stood for, which was activism and getting into office the person that he counted as his commander! His life lets us know that at times we are called to fight even to death for the principals, standards, and systems of belief that we hold. Writers of old use to say we should be all in or all out. In the same way in our spiritual journey we must be all in or all out! Jesus says in the text, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. We must realize that discipleship comes with a price! Jesus makes it clear being a disciple of His could be punishable by life, but if we choose to stay in the race there is a prize. Losing our lives for an earthly cause may prove to be tragic, but losing our lives for Jesus will give us eternal life. In this Lenten season we must count the cost of following Jesus!

REFLECTIONS

Let us use Jesus' passion and death this season as a reminder that He went to cross for each of us! And use it as reminder that we must pray!

ACTION STEPS

Each day as we wake up let us use this as a time to pray and reflect on Jesus' death and resurrection.

PRAYER

Oh, God in this Lenten season as we reflect on your passion and resurrection let us count the cost of discipleship. Let us choose you over the world being that you chose to sacrifice your life for us! Amen.

Wednesday March 11, 2026

Rev. Michael D. Earle

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 16:24–26 (NIV)

“24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”

THE DEVOTIONAL “Costly Obedience”

We live in a culture that celebrates gain more money, more influence, more comfort, more followers. But Jesus looks at His disciples and speaks a word that cuts against every instinct of self-preservation: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” Discipleship, Jesus makes clear, is not a bargain it is a cost. Jesus

invites us to release the illusion that life is found in protecting ourselves. In the texts here comes the cross an instrument of shame and death in the Roman world. This was not poetic language. To “take up the cross” meant public surrender, costly obedience, and willingness to suffer for faithfulness. Discipleship is not simply believing in Jesus; it is aligning our lives with His way, even when that way leads through loss. Jesus presses the question further: “What will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?” The word for life here is psyche the soul, the true self. We can accumulate success and still lose ourselves. Conversely, Jesus promises that those who lose their lives for His sake will find them. What appears like loss in the kingdom becomes gain. The cost of discipleship is real, but the reward is greater: life with Christ, shaped by love, purpose, and eternal hope.

REFLECTIONS

What is Jesus asking you to lay down in order to follow Him?

ACTION STEPS

Carry the cross publicly by showing Christ’s love. Align your life by prioritizing prayer, service, and Scripture. Journal weekly, reflecting honestly on obedience, sacrifice, growth, and God’s faithfulness daily always.

PRAYER

Lord, Thank You for this time of meditation. Help me to continue to deny myself so that I may take up my cross and follow You. Teach me to trust You in all things, even when the cost is great. I surrender my will to Yours. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Thursday March 12, 2026

Min. Mike Jones

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 16:24-26 (NIV)

“24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”

THE DEVOTIONAL

Matthew 16:24-26 outlines the cost of discipleship, requiring believers to deny selfish desires, “take up their cross” (surrender to God’s will, potentially through suffering), and follow Jesus. It teaches that

losing one's life for Christ actually saves it, as worldly gain is worthless compared to the soul's eternal value. Key components: Deny Yourself (v. 24): This means renouncing one's own agenda, ambitions, and self-centeredness to follow Jesus. Take Up Your Cross (v. 24): A call to absolute surrender, daily sacrifice, and potentially suffering for the sake of following Christ. It implies a voluntary, sacrificial, and public commitment, often involving the loss of personal comfort. Losing Life to Find It (v. 25): Those who try to live for themselves and hold onto worldly security will ultimately lose their soul, whereas those who give up their life for Jesus will find true, eternal life. Value of the Soul (v. 26): Jesus emphasizes that gaining the entire world is meaningless if it costs a person their soul, as nothing in existence is worth more than the soul. This passage functions as a direct challenge to worldly priorities, calling for total commitment to Jesus, who will later reward each person according to their actions Lordship: Following Jesus is not a "casual" or "cultural" commitment; it requires yielding total control to Him. Reward vs. Profit: While the world offers immediate "profit," Jesus points to an eternal reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ, where he will "repay each person according to what he has done."

REFLECTIONS

Deepen your Lenten prayer life by a consistent daily routine. Worship with friends or family. Be attentive to the prayers, readings, and songs. Discuss what you experienced after the service.

ACTION STEPS

Setting aside a day for prayer and meditation involves intentionally disconnecting from daily distractions to foster spiritual renewal, reflection, and intimacy with a higher power. Find a quiet, private spot.

PRAYER

Lord, transform me this Lent. Give me the strength to turn away from sin and be 100% available to you every day. As I look into my heart, help me to repent, let go of distractions, and walk in your light. May my sacrifices bring me to your heart. Amen.

Friday March 13, 2026

Eddie C. McCloud

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 16:24-26 (NIV)

“24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever

wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"

THE DEVOTIONAL "A Cross for Everyone"

Jesus made it clear as he instructed his disciples that following him, and his example indeed would result in consequences. Chief among these was the possibility of death. In the first century many Christians, were tortured, beheaded and suffered other excruciating manners of death. Some were even thrown to the lions and made a public spectacle of, for the entertainment of the Romans. As far-fetched as this may seem, consider examples of such martyrdom from past and even recent history. In 1945 Lutheran Pastor Deitrich Bonhoeffer was hanged in Germany. Bonhoeffer was a devout and just man who opposed the Nazis from almost the very beginning of their ascent to power. In September of 2025, Pope Leo honored 21st century martyrs. Among these was an American nun named Sister Dorothy Stang who had spent the last three decades trying to preserve the Amazon rainforest and defend the rights of poor settlers who were in conflict with powerful ranchers. Right before being killed, when asked if she had a weapon, she held up her Bible and replied, "this is my only weapon." A familiar hymn asks "must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free? No there's a cross for everyone and there's a cross for me." Yes, there is a cross for each of us to bear, possibly the forfeiture of life. We can take comfort though in knowing that in the end, a great reward awaits us in the form of an eternity in God's presence.

REFLECTIONS

By combining prayer with fasting.

ACTION STEPS

Start getting up a half hour earlier and designating that time as your time with God.

PRAYER

Father God, I thank you for this day. Help me rejoice and be glad in it. Please Order my steps today and let the words of my mouth and meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight Oh Lord my strength and my redeemer. Amen.

Saturday March 14, 2026

Rev. Angela D. Dix

SCRIPTURE: Luke 9:57-62 (NIV)

⁵⁷ As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

⁵⁸ Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." ⁵⁹ He said to another man, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." ⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." ⁶¹ Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." ⁶² Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

THE DEVOTIONAL: "The "But" First Barrier"

In this passage, three different people encounter Jesus. They all seem to have the right intention—they want to follow Him—but they each have a "but first" attached to their commitment.

- The first struggles with **comfort** (v. 58).
- The second struggles with **social/family obligation** (v. 59).
- The third struggles with **distraction and the past** (v. 61).

Jesus' responses can feel harsh, but He isn't being cruel; He is being honest. He knows that you cannot plow a straight line if you are looking over your shoulder. Discipleship isn't something we add to our "to-do" list once everything else is settled. It is the list. Often, what holds us back isn't a "bad" thing. It's a "good" thing (like family or security) that we've put in a "god" position. Jesus is calling us to a radical "now" that doesn't wait for the perfect circumstances to arrive. Are you waiting for a "safety net" or a guarantee of security before you obey what God has put on your heart? Are you telling God, "I'll serve You *after* the kids are grown, *after* the promotion, or *after* I feel more spiritual." What "Buts" are costing you a full relationship with God? Is it, **The Comfort and Security But?** "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." — Here is a volunteer with high emotions and good intentions. But Jesus' response about foxes having holes and birds having nests revealed the "but" in his heart: "I'll follow You, but I expect a certain level of predictability and comfort." In other words, "I'll serve, but only if it doesn't cost me my weekends/my reputation/my standard of living." If your "yes" is contingent on being comfortable, it isn't a "yes" to Jesus—it's a "yes" to your own

security. Is it, **The Obligation But?** *“He said to another man, ‘Follow me.’ But he replied, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’”* — This sounds incredibly reasonable. In that culture, burying your father was the highest familial duty. However, many scholars suggest the father wasn't dead yet; the man was likely saying, "Let me stay until my inheritance is settled and my family duties are finished." His "but" was: "I'll follow You, but first let me finish my own timeline." Are we saying, "I'll get serious about my faith *after* I graduate, *after* I get married, or *after* I've 'lived a little'?" Jesus' reply ("Let the dead bury their own dead") sounds harsh because He is highlighting that the Kingdom of God is a "now" reality. When we say, "but first," we are telling God that our schedule is more important than His calling. Or is it, the **“But of Past?”**

“Still another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.’” —

This person wanted one last look back. One last moment with the "old life." His "but" was: "I'll follow You, but I want to keep one foot in my past." "I'll follow You, but I'm going to keep these 'old' habits, 'old' friends, and 'old' grudges just in case this Jesus thing doesn't work out." Jesus uses the imagery of a plowman. If you plow a field while looking behind you, your rows will be crooked and useless. Discipleship requires a forward-facing heart.

REFLECTIONS

Activate the **“But”** Fast:

For the next 24 hours, pay close attention to your internal dialogue with God. Every time you feel a nudge to pray, to give, or to speak, and a "but..." pops into your head, stop. Acknowledge the "but," and then "Just Go" and do the thing anyway.

ACTION STEPS

1. Identify the "But": Write down the one thing that makes you hesitate when you think about following God more closely. Is it money? Reputation? A specific relationship? Explicitly name it.
2. Surrender the Schedule: Take your calendar or your mental plan for the week and pray: *“Lord, Your kingdom comes before these plans.”* Physically hold your hands out open as a sign that you aren't clinging to your own "will." Let Him have it ALL!

PRAYER

Lord, I confess that I often want to follow You on my own terms. I want the crown without the cross and the destination without the trek. Reveal to me the anchors that are holding me back. Give me the

Week#4:

The Winston-Salem Greenville District
Weekly Theme: “Embracing Simplicity”

Monday March 16, 2026

Rev. James L. Tillman

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:8 (KJV)

“⁸Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

THE DEVOTIONAL: “What are You Thinking?”

The Two Builders There were two builders in a small village. One named Charles, always focused on what was true, honorable, and pure. He believed in building strong homes that would last, and Sam's focused on shortcuts and quick fixes. He was more concerned with saving time not the quality of his work. Charles often reflected on Philippians 4:8, reminding himself to think about things that were excellent and worthy of praise. He ensured that his materials were the best and that his foundations were solid. His thoughts guided his actions. In contrast, Sam rushed through his work. He used inferior materials and cut corners. His thoughts were filled with doubt and negativity, which affected his decisions. One day, a severe storm hit the village. The winds, howled, and rain poured down. Charles's homes stood strong, providing safety and shelter to those inside. However, Sam's homes crumbled under the pressure, leaving families exposed to the elements. After the storm, the villagers thanked Charles for his hard work and dedication. Sam, realizing the consequences of his thoughts and actions, felt regret. He learned that what he focused on truly mattered. From that day on, Sam decided to change his thinking. He began reflecting on what was true, honorable, and commendable, just like Charles. He understood that his thoughts shaped his actions and determined the quality of his work and life.

REFLECTIONS

A mindset reflecting Philippians 4:8, shapes our lives in ways to benefit others and ourselves, aligning us with God's Will as we yield to Him.

ACTION STEPS

Consider daily Meditation on Philippians 4:8. God's word will anchor our mindset, grow into a God led habit, enhancing our life, and the lives around us.

PRAYER

Father, I Thank you, and I pray that you give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of your word, that transformation, and the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, and transformed, as we grow for Kingdom's sake. Thank you for your gift of grace and forgiveness of all our sins over two thousand years ago. Quicken us with your Word, Way, and Will, In Jesus Name Amen.

Tuesday March 17, 2026

Adrienne C. Speas

SCRIPTURE: 1 Timothy 6:6–7 (NIV)

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it."

THE DEVOTIONAL: "I Am So Satisfied"

There is a quiet strength that rises in us when we choose simplicity over striving. Paul reminds Timothy — and us — that true gain is not found in accumulation but in alignment. When our hearts rest in God, we discover a satisfaction that circumstances cannot manufacture, and the world cannot take away. Contentment is not complacency. It is clarity. It is the spiritual posture that says, "God, You are enough, and because You are enough, I am enough in You." In a culture that constantly urges us to want more, buy more, and become more, the Spirit invites us to breathe deeply and remember that everything we truly need is already held in God's hands. We entered this world empty-handed, and we will leave the same way. But in between those two moments, we have the sacred opportunity to live with open hands — receiving God's daily provision and releasing the unnecessary weight we were never meant to carry. Simplicity frees us. Contentment grounds us. Godliness shapes us. And together, they produce a life that is rich in peace, purpose, and joy. Today, may we dare to say with confidence: I am so satisfied — not because life is perfect, but because God is present.

REFLECTIONS

Lent invites me to slow down release distractions listen for God's voice choosing simplicity and stillness aware of God's steady presence.

ACTION STEPS

Daily prayer time begin with silence one scripture focus reduce distractions practice gratitude.

PRAYER

Gracious God, teach me the beauty of simplicity and the strength of contentment. Quiet the noise of unnecessary desires and center my heart on You. Help me to walk in gratitude, to rest in Your provision, and to find deep satisfaction in Your presence alone. Amen.

Wednesday March 18, 2026

Rev. Eleanor D. Miller

SCRIPTURE: Ecclesiastes 4:4 (NIV)

"And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind."

THE DEVOTIONAL: "Question: What are you chasing After?"

Lent is the forty days before Easter Sunday where Christians take self-inventory. reflect on their own lives and repent of any wrongdoing that is brought to their attention during this period of self-examination. The outcome of this special time spent with God fasting and praying should deepen the Christian's relationship with the Lord. If I were to ask, "what are you chasing after what would be your response"? Would your reply be I'm chasing after fame, fortune, power, notoriety, pleasure or something else? King Solomon would be the first to admit that if you are chasing after anything that does not deepen your intimacy with God, all your chasing is meaningless, it is like chasing after the wind, something that we can never catch. Much of our pursuits in life stem from trying to please other people rather than God and self, and all our hard work is a result of wanting more than our friends and foes have. Solomon discovered that the more you have the more you want and the more you make, the more you spend, it is a never-ending cycle. But in his old age Solomon found out that the best things in life are free. It is the simple intangible things in life such as love, joy, peace, all the fruit of the spirit that brings happiness, and no amount of money can buy these. They are freely given when we accept God's gift of Salvation, His beloved son.

REFLECTIONS

This Lenten season is an opportunity to deepen our relationship with God through prayer, fasting, and spending more time in God's word.

ACTION STEPS

Remember the love that God has for you; Reflect on how good God has been to you and rekindled the fire that you had when you first accepted Jesus.

PRAYER

Dear God, Jesus said in the word that the thief comes only to kill steal and destroy, but he has come that we may have life and have it more abundantly. Continue to fill our lives with abundance, not materially, but what you offer us through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thursday March 19, 2026

Min. Zaria J. Blow

SCRIPTURE: 1 Thessalonians 4:11 (NIV)

¹¹and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you,"

THE DEVOTIONAL: "Mind Your Business"

What does it mean to embrace simplicity? It means to reduce the clutter in your life by focusing on what truly matters. It's about letting go of all of the extra things and being satisfied with the basics. This is why 1 Thessalonians 4:11 tells us to make it our ambition to lead a quiet life. A quiet life is simple, it focuses your mind on only what's important. Having an ambition to do something makes it much more meaningful and valuable than just doing it because you want to or because you're told to. It's a way that we're reminded to yearn for the peace that only God can give us and to be calm even in the midst of storms. Being urged to mind our own business and to work with our hands pulls us away from the distractions of the world and pushes us into a deeper place of peace where we can further our connection to God. You can't make progress without working towards your goals and you can't focus on your progress when your mind is jumbled with distractions and interferences.

REFLECTIONS

A peaceful life begins with putting God first, then true faith simplifies every problem. By looking to God instead of worldly distractions, you experience true, guided peace.

ACTION STEPS

Start each day with a five minute, silence all distractions at a certain time every day to create peace, and find a hobby that connects you to God.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for being my source of peace. Give me ambition to lead a quiet life. Silence worldly noise and help me to build our connection. Help me to focus on what matters as I put you first, decrease distractions, strengthen my mind. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Friday March 20, 2026

Rev. Linda Kirksey-Jones

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

¹⁰He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

THE DEVOTIONAL: "You Are doing Too Much"

In Psalm 46, God spoke into chaos; Nations were raging, mountains were shaking, and waters were roaring. Right into the middle of all that noise God Says, "Stop! Cease striving, Be Still." There is a gentle firmness in God's voice when He says, "Be still." It is not a suggestion, nor is it an optional spiritual exercise. It is a command spoken to people who are overwhelmed, overextended and overcommitted. Here are some signs you may be doing too much.

- You feel guilty when you rest.
 - You say yes faster than you pray.
 - You are busy but not fulfilled.
 - You are productive but not peaceful.
 - You are serving God but not sitting with Him.
- These are not signs of failure. They are invitations to slow down. Think of Stillness as a Gift from God. You see, when God says, "Be still," He is not asking you to freeze. He is asking you to release. Release the pressure. Release the pace. Release the need to control outcomes. Release the belief that everything depends on you.

Stillness is where God restores clarity.
Stillness is where God resets priorities.
Stillness is where God reminds you who He is—
and who you are not.

You don't have to earn God's approval.
You don't have to outrun grace.
You don't have to hold everything together.
Sometimes the holiest thing you can do is slow down, breathe deeply, and let God be God.

In practical terms, Psalm 46:10 encourages us to take moments of stillness in our busy lives. This can involve setting aside time for prayer,

meditation, or reflection, allowing oneself to reconnect with God and find peace in His presence. By doing so, as believers we can cultivate a deeper faith and trust in God's guidance, especially during turbulent times.

REFLECTIONS

Many of us say yes out of guilt, fear, or habit. Sometimes the Holy Spirit whispers a truth that many may not want to admit: "You are doing too much."

ACTION STEPS

Jesus lived the most purposeful life in history, yet He moved with unhurried grace. Be Like Jesus He withdrew often. Prayed often. Rested intentionally. And said no without apology.

PRAYER

Lord, teach me the beauty of simplicity. Quiet the noise in my mind and the rush in my spirit. Show me where I am doing too much and give me the courage to lay down what You never asked me to carry. Help me to be still and know that You are God—not me, not my schedule, not my responsibilities. Just You alone. Amen.

Saturday March 21, 2026

Rev. Angela D. Dix

SCRIPTURE: Galatians 1:10 (ESV)

"10 For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ."

THE DEVOTIONAL: "Don't be a People Pleaser"

We live in a culture of constant "performance." Between curated feeds, LinkedIn milestones, and the pressure to have the "right" take on every trend, it's easy to feel like our worth is tied to how many people are nodding along with us. We become chameleons—changing our colors depending on who's watching just to avoid being "canceled" or left out. In this verse, Paul gets incredibly blunt. He basically says: You can't be a servant of Christ and a slave to your notifications. People-pleasing is a trap because human approval is a moving target. If you live for their "likes," you'll die by their "dislikes." Paul realized that trying to keep everyone happy wasn't just exhausting—it was actually keeping him from his purpose. When we obsess over what "they" think, we lose the ability to hear what God is saying. The Real Talk Being a "servant of Christ" isn't about being religious or rigid; it's about alignment. It's deciding that there is only one

"Performance Review" that actually matters. When you stop auditioning for the world, you finally have the energy to show up as your authentic self. You don't need a viral moment to be valid. You don't need to say "yes" to every social invite to be loved. When you serve an Audience of One (Jesus the Christ), you gain the rarest thing in the world: PEACE.

REFLECTIONS

Today, before you post, speak, or commit to something, ask: "Am I doing this for the 'clout' or for the Call?"

ACTION STEPS

1. The "Pause Before You Post"

Before you share a photo, a hot take, or a life update online, wait 60 seconds. Ask yourself: "Am I sharing this for the 'likes' (human approval) or because it's true and helpful (service to Christ)?" If it's purely for the ego boost, try keeping that moment just for yourself and God instead.

2. Practice the "Honest No"

The next time you're asked to do something you don't have the capacity for, don't make up an elaborate excuse to soften the blow. Practice saying: *"I'd love to help, but I can't commit to that right now."* Realizing that you can be kind without being a doormat, is the first step toward breaking the people-pleasing cycle.

PRAYER

God, help me log out of the need for human validation. When I feel the itch to perform or the fear of being misunderstood, ground me in the truth that Your 'well done' is the only one I need. Let my confidence come from Your love, not my reputation. Amen.

Week#5:

The Durham District

Weekly Theme: "Practicing Forgiveness"

Monday March 23, 2026

Rev. Venessa Hughes

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV)

"14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

THE DEVOTIONAL: “He Desires Freedom”

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (NKJV)
Forgiveness is not optional in the life of a believer – it is ESSENTIAL. In Matthew 6, Jesus places forgiveness is the very heart of our relationship with God. Immediately after teaching the Lord’s Prayer, He emphasizes that receiving God’s forgiveness is inseparably connected to our willingness to forgive others. Forgiveness is not denying the pain or pretending the offense didn’t matter. It is choosing obedience over resentment. When we hold onto unforgiveness, it becomes a barrier-not just between us and others, but between us and God. Unforgiveness hardens the heart, clouds our prayers and weighs down our spirit. Jesus calls us to forgive because we ourselves have been forgiven much. Every time we release someone from a debt, they owe us emotionally or spiritually, we reflect the grace God has poured out on us. Forgiveness frees us more than it frees the offender-it lifts the burden from our soul and restores our PEACE. Practicing forgiveness is a daily act of faith. It may require prayer, humility, and sometimes repeated surrender. But when we forgive, we walk in the freedom and healing that God desires for us.

REFLECTIONS

Create time.

ACTION STEPS

Set different times.

PRAYER

Prayer Lord, help me to forgive as You have forgiven me. I release every hurt, offense and bitterness into Your hands. Soften my heart and teach me to walk in grace, mercy and love. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Tuesday March 24, 2026

Rev. Robert Williams

SCRIPTURE: Acts 20:24 NIV (NIV)

“²⁴ However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.”

THE DEVOTIONAL: “God’s Grace”

During my childhood, teams were formed with captains selecting members based on their athletic ability. Naturally, those who excelled at the sport

were chosen first, while children perceived as less skilled were often left out, resulting in feelings of exclusion. I recall making a conscious decision one day to select those who were usually overlooked, which brought noticeable happiness to their faces. In life, we may fall short of various expectations and feel unworthy of acceptance. According to Paul, his mission was to share the message of God's grace—an unearned favor that cannot be attained through merit. Grace alleviates the pressure of striving for acceptance, granting inclusion where it is not deserved or expected. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace. I am thankful for this grace and extend a sincere welcome to all: you are part of the team, because you are saved by His grace.

REFLECTIONS

How readily do you extend grace to others? In what ways can you practice extending grace to others and to yourself?

ACTION STEPS

Identify someone you need to forgive or receive forgiveness from and take a step towards reconciliation; it maybe even yourself. Allow "Grace" into your situation.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your unconditional grace and love, which includes us not by merit but by Your kindness. Help us accept this gift, share it with others, and encourage those who feel left out. Guide us to fulfill our purpose, share Your good news, and persevere in faith. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Wednesday March 25, 2026

Rev. Dr. Annette Mosley

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:14–16 (NIV)

“¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Fasting ¹⁶ “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.”

THE DEVOTIONAL “Practice Forgiveness”

Lent invites me to slow down, examine my heart, and confront areas where I resist surrender. During this season of reflection and repentance,

forgiveness becomes especially significant. In Matthew 6:14–15, Jesus reminds me that forgiveness is not simply an emotional response but a spiritual discipline. When I withhold forgiveness, I discover that my heart becomes burdened, my prayers feel distant, and my awareness of God’s grace grows dim. The parable in Matthew 18:21–35 deepens this Lenten call. I see myself in the servant who receives extraordinary mercy yet struggles to extend mercy to others. Lent exposes this contradiction in my life. I am keenly aware of how much I depend on God’s forgiveness, yet I sometimes cling to resentment as if it protects me. This season invites me to release that illusion and trust God with both my wounds and my justice. Practicing forgiveness during Lent becomes an act of repentance and renewal. It is not about excusing wrongs but about laying them at the foot of the cross. As I forgive, I make room for healing, humility, and deeper communion with God. Forgiveness prepares my heart to fully receive the hope of resurrection that Easter promises.

REFLECTIONS

How is this Lenten season inviting you to surrender resentment, trust God with your wounds, and practice forgiveness as repentance that leads to healing and deeper communion with Him?

ACTION STEPS

Identify one resentment this Lent, surrender it at the cross in daily prayer, and take one intentional step toward forgiveness through reflection, release, or changed response.

PRAYER

Merciful God, during this Lenten season, search our hearts and reveal what we resist surrendering. Grant us grace to forgive, courage to release resentment, and humility to trust You with healing, renewal, and transformation as we journey toward the hope of Easter. Amen.

Thursday March 26, 2026

Rev. Dr. Cathy C. Jones

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:9-14 (NIV)

“⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰ so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you

may have great endurance and patience, ¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

THE DEVOTIONAL “What Will They Say?”

What would you like people to say about you? That you’re smart? That you’re attractive? That you’re important? Paul prays that God will fill us with the knowledge of his will. Why? So that we may “live a life worthy of the Lord.” Can you imagine someone saying about you, “I know he/she lives a life worthy of the Lord!” What will our lives look like if we live in a manner “worthy of the Lord”? For starters, imagine Jesus watching us and saying things like these: “Look, there’s a young boy being kind to an injured classmate. I would have done that myself!” “There’s a business leader who just made a decision based on what is best for his employees. I like that!” “There’s a woman who faces one crisis after another but continues to trust in God with all her heart. That’s worthy of me. These words from Paul will help us understand how we can “be transformed by Jesus,” if we are willing to live a life worthy of the Lord. So, first of all, do we want to live a life worthy of the Lord? Will the Lord see reflections of his life in the way we live?

REFLECTIONS

Let us as children of the Most High God walk as He walked and love as He loved so that we may be called His disciples.

ACTION STEPS

Let the word of the Lord dwell in us richly. As David said in Psalms 119:11, Thy word I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, Your life was meaningful and loving! I too want to live my life as you lived yours. Father, today as I walk with you, help me to live a life worthy of you, pleasing you in every way and bearing fruit in every good work. Amen.

Friday March 27, 2026

Rev. John Cradle, Sr.

SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 30:19 (NKJV)

“I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.”

THE DEVOTIONAL: "Choose Wisely"

Every day, God places before us a table of options—some obvious, some subtle, some wrapped in emotion, and others wrapped in opportunity. But the beauty of God's love is this: He never forces your hand. He invites. He guides. He warns. He encourages. But He always leaves room for you to choose. When you choose obedience, you honor God. When you choose integrity, you honor your calling. When you choose peace over pettiness, purpose over pressure, and faith over fear—you honor the person God is shaping you to become. You are never without a path back to life. Today, honor your choice by choosing what aligns with your future, not your frustration. Choose what aligns with your purpose, not your pain. Choose what aligns with God's voice, not the noise around you. Because when you honor your choice, you honor the God who entrusted you with the power to make it.

REFLECTIONS

And here's the grace: even when past choices weren't the best, God still places new ones before you. You are never trapped. You are never without options.

ACTION STEPS

- Begin or end your day with silence before speaking a single word to God.
- Let God speak before you speak.

PRAYER

Father, draw me closer during this sacred season. Quiet the noise around me and the noise within. Strip away what distracts me and strengthen what delights You. Renew my heart, reshape my desires, and revive my spirit. May this Lent become a turning point in my walk with You. Amen.

Saturday March 28, 2026

Rev. Angela D. Dix

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:12-13 (NIV)

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

THE DEVOTIONAL: "The Gift of Forgiveness"

Notice the order of operations here. Before Paul gives us a "to-do" list of virtues, he reminds us of our identity chosen, holy, and dearly loved. You

aren't being asked to be kind so that God will love you; you are asked to be kind because He already loves you. The "fabric" of this spiritual wardrobe includes Compassion & Kindness: The outward expression of a heart that notices others. Humility & Gentleness: The inner strength that refuses to demand its own way. Patience: The shock absorber for life's frustrations. But the "outer coat" that holds it all together is forgiveness. Paul acknowledges that people will annoy us, and "grievances" will happen. But forgiveness is a "gift" for all parties involved. While it certainly benefits the receiver, the biblical and psychological reality is that the one who forgives is the one who is truly set free. When we refuse to forgive, we effectively become a debt collector. We spend our mental and emotional energy tracking what was taken from us, how we were wronged, and what the other person "owes" us to make it right. The command to "forgive as the Lord forgave you" isn't just a moral obligation; it's a spiritual health mandate. Forgiveness is the act of handing that ledger over to God. You aren't saying the hurt didn't happen; you are saying, "I am no longer going to exhaust myself trying to collect a debt that only God can settle." Release yourself from this debt. You cannot put on the clean, beautiful garments of **compassion, kindness, and peace** if your hands are tightly clenched around an old grievance. When you release a grievance, you create an immediate void. But God fills that empty space with His own peace—a peace that the world (and the person who hurt you) cannot give or take away.

REFLECTIONS

With Forgiveness: You see through a lens of grace. You realize that "hurt people hurt people." This doesn't excuse their behavior, but it prevents their poison from becoming *your* poison.

ACTION STEPS

Is there a specific "debt" you've been trying to collect that is actually costing you more in stress and joy than it's really worth?

- Hand it over to the Lord, remembering the massive debt He erased for you.
- Write a personal "Letter of Release"—not to be sent to the person, but as a symbolic way for you to hand that debt over to God.

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for choosing me and loving me before I ever did anything to deserve it. Today, help me to dress my heart in Your character. When I am tempted to be harsh or impatient, remind me of the

grace You've poured out on me, so I can pour it out on others. Amen.

betrayal. Consider your own relationships; how can you foster unity and grace in your circle?

Week#6:

The Charleston Columbia District
Weekly Theme: "Jesus' Passion and Death"

Monday March 30, 2026

Rev. Joe N. Brown

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 26:19-21 (NIV)

¹⁹ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. ²⁰ When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹ And while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me."

THE DEVOTIONAL: "At the Table"

In Matthew 26:19-21, the scene is set at the Passover table, a sacred space where tradition meets revelation. Jesus reclines with His disciples, sharing not just a meal but a moment filled with profound significance. It's here, amidst the warmth of fellowship, that Jesus drops a bombshell: "One of you will betray me." This revelation brings to light the complexity of human nature—a theme that resonates deeply in our own lives. "At The Table" signifies more than physical sustenance; it represents communion with God and each other. This table is a place of connection, memory, and spiritual nourishment. The act of Jesus sharing a meal indicates His desire for intimacy with His followers, even in the face of imminent betrayal. It challenges us to reflect on our own tables—who do we welcome, and how do we treat those who may let us down? What This Teaches Us About Jesus' Passion While Jesus is at the table:

- He chooses love over escape
- He faces truth instead of hiding
- He offers grace even to the betrayer
- He walks knowingly toward the cross

This moment shows that: The cross begins with obedience, love, and self-giving, not nails.

REFLECTIONS

At the table of deliverance, Jesus reveals the cost of redemption. Surrounded by friends, wounded by betrayal, yet committed to love— Jesus stays at the table, so we can come too.

ACTION STEPS

This is an invitation to embrace forgiveness, understanding, and love, even in the face of

PRAYER

Gracious Lord, thank You for the invitation at the table" of Your love and grace. Help us create spaces of acceptance and authentic connection. Teach us to love unconditionally and embrace the flaws of those around us with grace. May our tables reflect Your heart for community and reconciliation. Amen.

Tuesday March 31, 2026

Rev. Satchell Doyle, Sr.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 26: 37-41(NKJV)

³⁷ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. ³⁸ Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." ³⁹ He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." ⁴⁰ Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak."

THE DEVOTIONAL: "Watch and Pray"

In our current society, we are constantly reminded of life's many uncertainties. One day may bring a global crisis, while another brings extreme weather conditions. Although we recognize that these events are beyond our control, we believe that God is in control. The way we respond to life's circumstances is shaped by our prayer life. Prayer is vital, and it calls for a dedicated and willing heart. Jesus brought Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along when he went to pray. Although they fell asleep, he understood that their intentions were good, even if they couldn't stay awake. Take time to watch and pray, trusting that God will reveal the areas you need to focus on, helping you develop a meaningful and fruitful prayer life.

REFLECTIONS

What areas you need to focus on in your prayer life? Are you praying for members of your community, such as the mayor, government officials, police officers, firefighters, teachers?

ACTION STEPS

Challenge yourself to identify three areas that you want to pursue in prayer and invite others to join.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of prayer that allows me to communicate with you each day. Help me to continue to "Watch and Pray." Amen.

Wednesday April 1, 2026

Rev. Michelle V. Williams

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 26:36-46 (KJV)

³⁶ Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. ³⁷ And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. ³⁸ Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

³⁹ And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. ⁴⁰ And he cometh unto the

disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

⁴¹ Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

⁴² He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. ⁴³ And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. ⁴⁵ Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me. complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*."

THE DEVOTIONAL: "Tears to Triumph"

We all know about tears. Tears of joy. Tears of anger. Especially tears of pain. Pain so intense that it brings forth a flow of water that gushes from our soul. In our text, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is experiencing this kind of pain while preparing to be betrayed. Denied. Abandoned. Beaten and nailed to an old rugged cross. All to pay a debt He did not owe because the world owed a debt it could not pay. And knowing what He would have to endure, Jesus took His emotions to His Father in prayer. He was so stressed that some of his small blood vessels burst his sweat becoming like drops of blood. But within that prayer time, His Spirit man was refreshed. He hadn't yet faced all that He had to face. But in talking to His Father, He was reminded that His pain had a purpose and that He

was not isolated: His Father was right there with Him to bring Him through it all. Life will happen. Tears will fall. But if we pour out our hearts to God and trust His plan and process, we will be reassured that our pain has meaning and that we are not alone. Suffering can help mold us into who we are called to be! We must just tie a knot at the end of our rope of faith and hold on. God will get us from our tears to our triumph.

REFLECTIONS

Scheduling multiple focused prayer times throughout the day along with the usual spontaneous "talks" with the Father.

ACTION STEPS

Start a prayer journal.

PRAYER

Father, Thank you for always being there for us. Help us to like Jesus always bring to You everything that concerns us and to trust that through Your plan and process we will be victorious in every situation. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Thursday April 2, 2026

Dionne L Pringle

SCRIPTURE: Matthew Chapter 27:27-31(ESV)

²⁷ Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. ²⁸ And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹ and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰ And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹ And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him."

THE DEVOTIONAL: "The Cross"

First, the cross shows me the depth of God's love. Jesus willingly endured pain, rejection, and death out of love. When I pray, this reminds me that I am approaching a God who understands suffering from the inside, not from a distance. That makes prayer more honest. I don't feel the need to hide fear, pain, or weakness, because Jesus Himself cried out in agony and trust to the Father. Second, Jesus' suffering teaches me humility and surrender in prayer. In Gethsemane, He prayed, "Not my will, but yours be done." That shapes how I pray—not only asking for what I want, but learning to trust God's will even when it is hard. Prayer becomes

less about control and more about obedience and faith. Third, His death gives me confidence in prayer. Because Jesus died and rose again, I believe the barrier between God and humanity has been removed. I can pray boldly, knowing I am forgiven and welcomed, not because of my goodness, but because of His sacrifice. Finally, the cross deepens my compassion and gratitude. When I reflect on Jesus' suffering, my prayers naturally include thanksgiving and a greater concern for others who are hurting. It moves me to pray not only for myself, but for the world, with a heart shaped by sacrificial love. In short, Jesus' suffering and death transform prayer from a routine practice into a personal, trusting conversation with a loving Savior who understands pain, offers forgiveness, and invites me to walk in faith.

REFLECTIONS

Increase the number of hours and minutes you focus on God's word. Listen closely to His voice to be led in the right direction.

ACTION STEPS

8 am daily and 9pm nightly. Say your prayers, read your scriptures and meditate on the Word of Jesus Christ.

PRAYER

Father, I thank you for being the head of my Life. Lord, I thank you for the gift of life. Father, I pray, not only asking for what I want, but learning to trust God's will even when it is hard. Father, I thank you for your love, peace, grace and mercy.

Friday April 3, 2026

Grace E. Robinson

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 26:28 (ESV)

"²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

THE DEVOTIONAL: "Jesus Gave His Blood for Me"

I want to tell you about something important Jesus did for us. In Matthew 26:28, Jesus said, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." When I hear that, I think about how much Jesus loves us. I'm only 10 years old, but even I know giving your blood is serious. Blood means life. Jesus was telling His friends He was about to give His life so we could be forgiven. That makes me feel both sad and thankful at the same time. Jesus knew He was going to die. He knew people would hurt Him, laugh at Him, and put Him on a cross. He didn't run away. He stayed.

He stayed because He was thinking about me and you. He was thinking about our mistakes, our bad choices, and the things we do that aren't right. Instead of giving up on us, Jesus gave Himself for us. Jesus showed us his love. The passion of Jesus shows me real love isn't just saying "I love you." Real love is doing something. My daddy says real love is an action word. Jesus showed us real love by bleeding for us, sacrificing for us and most of all...forgiving us. So, when I think about the death of Jesus for us all...that's the greatest sign of passion!

REFLECTIONS

I can deepen my prayer life through the Lenten Season by always praying to Jesus.

ACTION STEPS

Pick a time of the day, get away from distractions and pray. Repeat.

PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for loving me and my family. Please, provide for those who do not have a way to eat or a place to sleep. Please continue to love us. Amen.

Friday April 4, 2026

Joyce Broughton

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 26: 63-68 (ESV)

"⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." ⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." ⁶⁷ Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, ⁶⁸ saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"

THE DEVOTIONAL: "The Grand Finale"

Matthew 26 marks the beginning of Jesus' final journey to the cross and reveals both His divine mission and His human suffering. In this chapter, Jesus prepares His disciples for His crucifixion, making it clear that His death is not an accident but part of God's sovereign plan. While Jesus remains faithful and obedient to the Father, His disciples struggle to understand what lies ahead. Judas betrays Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, fulfilling prophecy and exposing the depths of human greed

A Note of Gratitude

and sin. Although the other disciples declare their loyalty, fear and uncertainty later cause them to abandon Him. One of the most powerful moments in Matthew 26 takes place in the Garden of Gethsemane. Overcome with sorrow, Jesus prays earnestly to the Father, asking if the cup of suffering could pass from Him. Yet, in complete submission, He prays, "Not as I will, but as You will." This moment reveals both His humanity and His perfect obedience. Despite knowing the suffering that awaits Him, Jesus chooses faithfulness out of love for humanity. As Jesus is arrested and brought before the religious leaders, the injustice of His suffering becomes evident. False witnesses testify against Him, and He is mocked, beaten, and humiliated despite His innocence. Throughout this ordeal, Jesus remains mostly silent, fulfilling prophecy and demonstrating humility and submission. His silence reflects His willingness to endure suffering without resistance to accomplish God's redemptive plan.

REFLECTIONS

Choose a consistent time of day pray if it's brief. Early mornings or quiet evenings work. Consistency helps build a habit of intentional communication with God rather praying when convenient.

ACTION STEPS

Wake up 10–15 minutes earlier pray before starting your day. Begin thanking God for a new day, read a short Scripture, ask for guidance, strength, and peace for what lies ahead.

PRAYER

It is a blessing to know our Heavenly Father loves us so deeply that He gave His only Son so we may have abundant life. Jesus humbled Himself to bring love, peace, forgiveness, and salvation. As believers, we follow Him in unity and truth, giving God all glory. Amen.

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- Rev. Clifton C. Harris: Presiding Elder of the "*Mighty*" Durham District
- Rev. Faye R. Houston: Presiding Elder of the "*Wonderous*" Winston-Salem Greenville District

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It is by the Grace of God, and through your collective commitment the Carolina Region of the 7th Episcopal District of the CME Church stands united in this mission of Faith.

To God Be the Glory!