

# 6 SPIRITUAL GOALS FOR THE NEW YEAR



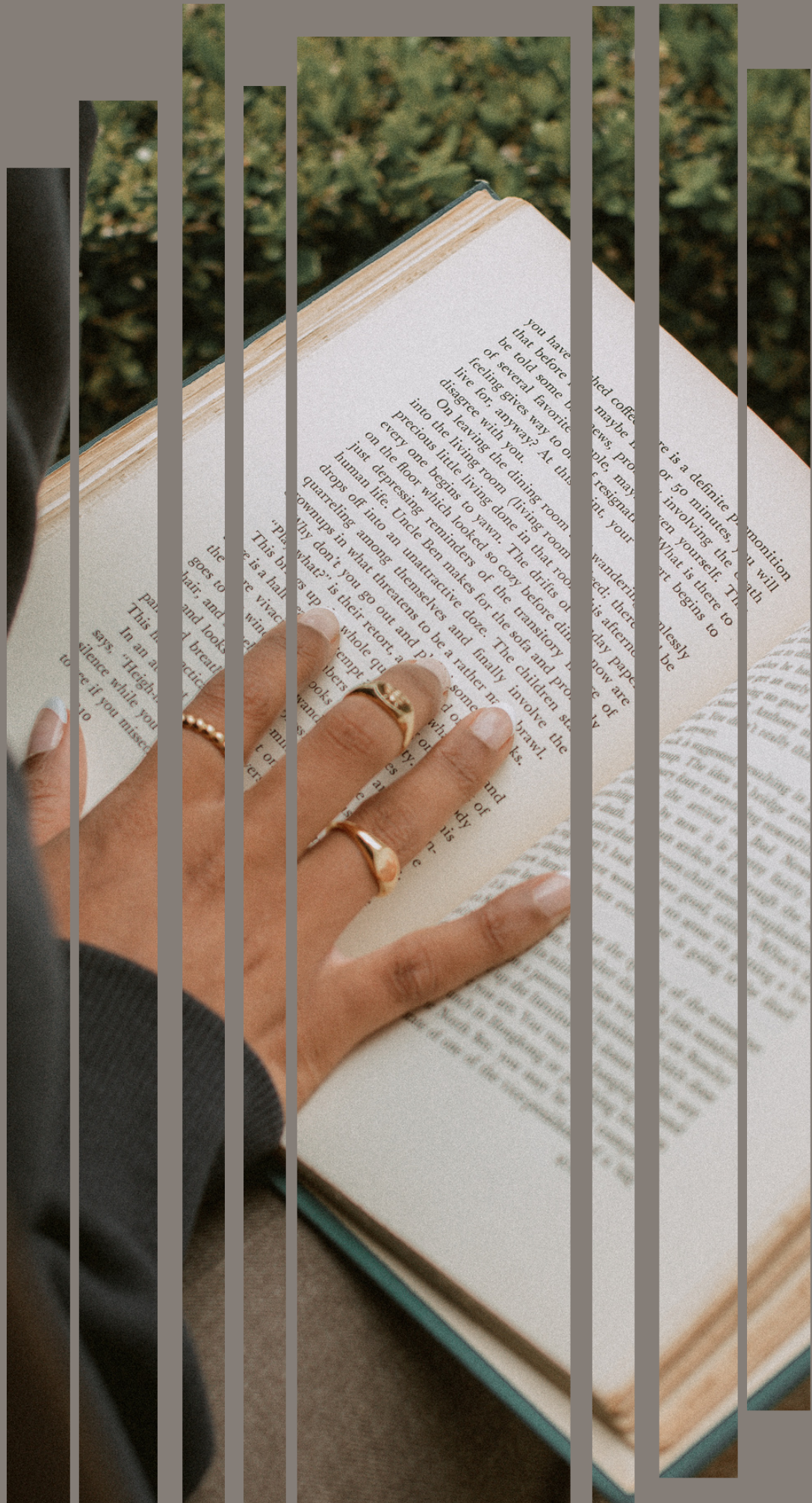
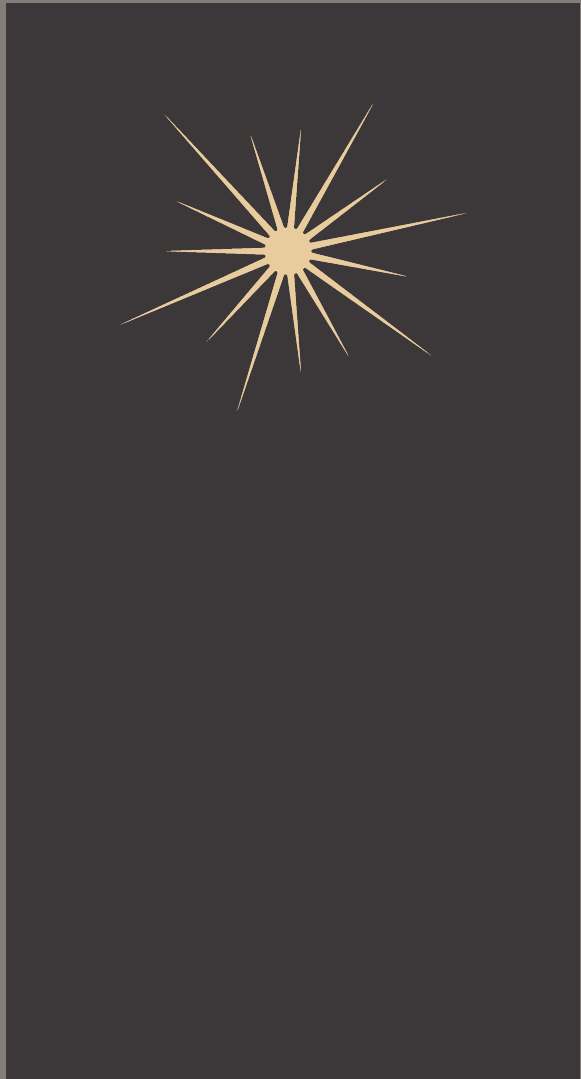
BY MICHELLE LAZUREK





The new year is a prime time for people to set new goals for themselves. But often, the goals we set for ourselves are rooted in selfishness. While there's nothing wrong with wanting to improve your health, put money away for a rainy day, or lose that extra ten pounds, we often place spiritual goals at the bottom of our to-do list. What if 2023 was the year we re-defined success by focusing on our spiritual goals rather than our personal ones?

What if we took the time to ask God what he wanted for our lives rather than fitting him into our already regimented schedules? Here are six spiritual goals for the new year:








# 1. Practice Spiritual Disciplines

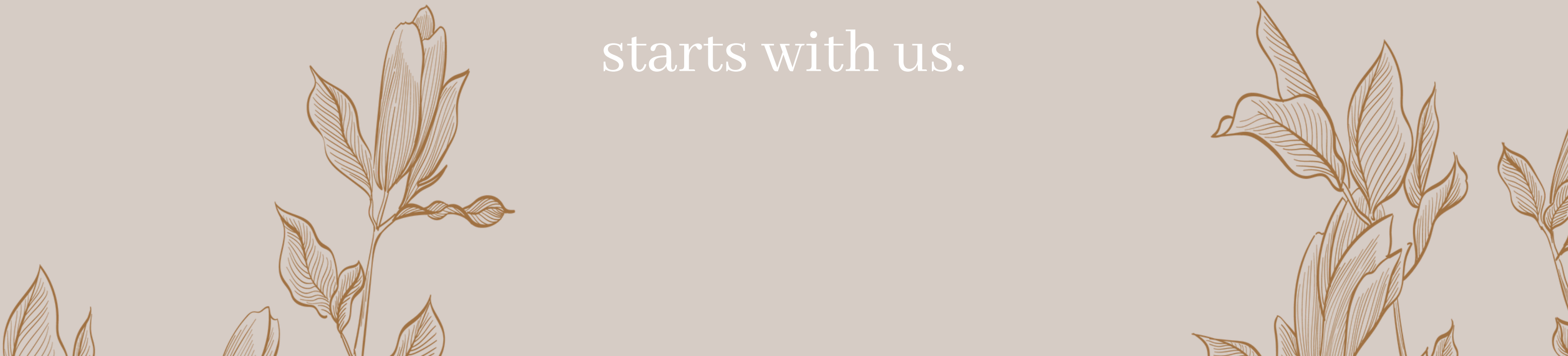
We all know that reading the Bible and prayer are integral parts of our spiritual growth. But there are additional spiritual disciplines that can also greatly enhance our intimacy with the Lord. For example, Elijah practiced solitude and silence, and the Lord spoke to him: "Then the LORD said, Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD. Behold, the LORD is about to pass by." And a great and mighty wind tore into the mountains and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave."





Daniel fasted, and the Lord blessed him: He said: "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see" (Daniel 1:13-14).

Paul practiced writing when he said to Timothy, "When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments" (1 Timothy 4:13). What if we took time out of our regular schedule to commune with God in different ways? What would it do for our intimacy with the Lord? What would it do for our churches? It is clear churches need revitalization. But revitalization starts with us.







## 2. PRAY IN A NEW WAY

While we may pray to God regularly, how often do we take the time to pray to him and listen for him to speak to us? The Holy Spirit wants to speak into our lives. He wants to reveal new things to us through God's Word; he wants to give us direction and guide every aspect of our lives. Scripture says every hair on our head is numbered. If God took the time to number the hairs on her head, surely he would have a plan for our spiritual lives, right? Take a moment to analyze your prayer life. Is it feeling stale? Sometimes the best way to have a deeper relationship with God is to revitalize your prayer life. Jesus often "went up to lonely places to pray." His intimate communion with the Lord was what kept him from giving in to the world's temptations throughout his years of ministry. If Jesus felt it was an integral part of his relationship with God, shouldn't we too?



# Read the Bible in *One Year*

Did you know that if you read five chapters of Scripture each day for five days a week starting in January, you would have read the Bible cover to cover in ten months? Bible reading seems much more doable than reading sixty-six books of the Bible when it's broken down into smaller goals. But often, we don't read the Bible cover to cover because we think the Old Testament is irrelevant or because the New Testament is repetitive commands they've read before.



If you have no interest in reading the Bible in its entirety, ask yourself this question: I have read the Bible, but have I ever taken the time to study it? In the new year, pray before you read and ask God to reveal one new nugget of truth from his Word. You'll be astonished at how many verses you have read many times before, only to read it with new meaning and application for your life this time around.



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## 4. READ THE BIBLE *in a Different Translation*

ALTHOUGH MANY OF US MAY HAVE READ THE BIBLE COVER TO COVER, MAYBE WE CAN MAKE A GOAL TO READ THE BIBLE IN A NEW TRANSLATION. YOU MAY HAVE A TRANSLATION YOU ARE MOST COMFORTABLE WITH, BUT HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED READING IT IN A TRANSLATION YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN BEFORE? THE MESSAGE, FOR EXAMPLE, READS LIKE A STORYBOOK BECAUSE IT DOESN'T HAVE VERSE NUMBERS OR SUBHEADINGS. CHALLENGE YOURSELF TO COMPARE TRANSLATIONS OF YOUR FAVORITE VERSES. AND WHAT NEW WAY DOES THE LORD SPEAK TO YOU WHEN THE WORD IS TRANSLATED DIFFERENTLY?

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## 5. Do an Inductive Bible Study

Elder Fitz, part of the LFCC Minister's Corner, has a series of Youtube videos on how to do inductive Bible studies. In it, he tells viewers three ways to conduct this study.

The first strategy is to make *Observations*. In this stage, readers are not cross-referencing with or consulting commentaries. Look at the text for exactly what it says. Gather facts and ask questions who is speaking? Who is the audience? Who is the author? Identify key verses in Scripture so you can look deeper.





The second step is *Investigation*. Fitz encourages viewers to pray before, during, and after Bible study and to keep a log of the information they discover. In this step, readers do word studies and look for repeating words, as well as anything that stands out to them, including phrases that repeat or a theme of the Scripture. This step is where readers use Bible dictionaries and concordances to enhance their research.

The third step is *Application*. Readers now ask themselves: how does this passage apply to me? Ask the following questions: Is there a call to obedience by what you are reading? How am I more like Christ? Is there anything I need to change? Any skills I need to develop? How is my prayer life? What biblical principle do you need to change?



Readers are encouraged to take an introspective look at their lives as a result.







# 6. Take a Weekly Prayer Challenge

Prayers are a wonderful way to commune with God regularly. It is important not only to present our request to God but also to praise him confess our sins, and be thankful for his presence in our lives. But often, our prayers get watered down to what we want: our agenda, our will, and our desires. Set aside one day a week to pray for the needs of those around you. You can create an ACTS 1:8 method of prayer by asking yourself: Who is my Judea? Who is my Samaria? And who is at the ends of the earth that I know? In other words, your Judea might be your neighbors and people within your immediate community. Your Samaria might be people within the surrounding cities and states.





The ends of the earth are those who can be those admissions work or those in other countries who you know who you can keep in prayer. We often don't think about what is happening in other countries because it's not directly affecting us. But what if we set aside one day where we ask God to free the captives, heal the sick and drive out the demons in third-world countries?

This might revitalize our prayer life for the better. It would broaden our finite perspectives and increase our compassion for those less fortunate than us.



It is easy to get into a spiritual rut. Because we practice the same strategies for growth, we often remain stagnant in our faith. But by committing to engaging in the above activities, we may find our spiritual life is more vibrant than ever before, and we are engaging with the Savior in new and exciting ways.






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