



ATLANTA FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - JULY 2026



THE INVICT⁺US TIMES

DAILY DEVOTIONAL STUDY GUIDE

***FAITH THAT
CANNOT BE
DEFEATED.***



FREEDOM. COURAGE. RECONCILIATION. HOPE.

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INVICTUS

William Ernest Henley

Out of the night that covers me,
 Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
 For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
 I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
 My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
 Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
 Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
 How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
 I am the captain of my soul.



THE GOSPEL IN

INVICTUS

FAITH THAT CANNOT BE DEFEATED

FREEDOM. COURAGE. RECONCILIATION. HOPE.



WELCOME!

Dear Atlanta First UMC Community,

This devotional invites you to explore the themes of resilience, courage, and unbreakable hope found in the film *Invictus* through the lens of the Gospel. Just as *Invictus* tells a story of perseverance and unity in the face of division—seen in Nelson Mandela's steady leadership after his release from prison and his vision to unite a fractured nation through rugby—this guide connects those themes to the Scriptures that teach us the truth of Christ's victory over fear, injustice, and despair. Each week, we will focus on a theme: freedom, courage, reconciliation, and hope! Designed for individuals, families, or small groups, this four-week devotional journey offers daily reflections and practices to help you grow in faith that cannot be defeated.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Each weekday includes:

- A scripture for reflection
- A short devotional thought
- A spiritual practice or activity
- A closing prayer

Saturday and Sunday are an intentional invitation to Sabbath, worship, and rest.

You will need a Bible (or Bible app), a journal, a writing tool, and maybe a candle or some way to help your brain, body and soul know that it is time "to be still and know that God is God."

Bring this Guide with you to the Worship Service on Sunday mornings to take notes for the week ahead.

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WEEK 1 - FREEDOM

Weekly Scripture: Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 (NLT)

³⁴ "I am Abraham's servant," he explained. ³⁵ "And the Lord has greatly blessed my master; he has become a wealthy man. The Lord has given him flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, a fortune in silver and gold, and many male and female servants and camels and donkeys.

³⁶ "When Sarah, my master's wife, was very old, she gave birth to my master's son, and my master has given him everything he owns. ³⁷ And my master made me take an oath. He said, 'Do not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women.

³⁸ Go instead to my father's house, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son.'

⁴² "So today when I came to the spring, I prayed this prayer: 'O Lord, God of my master, Abraham, please give me success on this mission. ⁴³ See, I am standing here beside this spring. This is my request. When a young woman comes to draw water, I will say to her, 'Please give me a little drink of water from your jug.' ⁴⁴ If she says, 'Yes, have a drink, and I will draw water for your camels, too,' let her be the one you have selected to be the wife of my master's son.'

⁴⁵ "Before I had finished praying in my heart, I saw Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water. So I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.'

⁴⁶ She quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and said, 'Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!' So I drank, and then she watered the camels.

⁴⁷ "Then I asked, 'Whose daughter are you?' She replied, 'I am the daughter of Bethuel, and my grandparents are Nahor and Milcah.' So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists.

⁴⁸ "Then I bowed low and worshiped the Lord. I praised the Lord, the God of my master, Abraham, because he had led me straight to my master's niece to be his son's wife. ⁴⁹ So tell me—will you or won't you show unfailing love and faithfulness to my master? Please tell me yes or no, and then I'll know what to do next."

⁵⁸ So they called Rebekah. "Are you willing to go with this man?" they asked her.

And she replied, "Yes, I will go."

⁵⁹ So they said good-bye to Rebekah and sent her away with Abraham's servant and his men. The woman who had been Rebekah's childhood nurse went along with her. ⁶⁰ They gave her this blessing

as she parted:

"Our sister, may you become the mother of many millions! May your descendants be strong and conquer the cities of their enemies."

⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her servant girls mounted the camels and followed the man. So Abraham's servant took Rebekah and went on his way.

⁶² Meanwhile, Isaac, whose home was in the Negev, had returned from Beer-lahai-roi. ⁶³ One evening as he was walking and meditating in the fields, he looked up and saw the camels coming. ⁶⁴ When Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac, she quickly dismounted from her camel. ⁶⁵ "Who is that man walking through the fields to meet us?" she asked the servant.

And he replied, "It is my master." So Rebekah covered her face with her veil. ⁶⁶ Then the servant told Isaac everything he had done.

⁶⁷ And Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife. He loved her deeply, and she was a special comfort to him after the death of his mother.



Weekly Maxim:

My past does not define me.

As Mandela walks out of prison after 27 years, he embodies a freedom that is deeper than physical release—a freedom of spirit that refuses bitterness. Mandela walks out of prison physically free, but his greatest act of freedom is refusing revenge. Rebekah demonstrates freedom by stepping courageously into God's future. This week invites us to consider what it means to walk in that kind of freedom through Christ.

SERMON NOTES

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.



So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.

Freedom in Christ is more than the removal of restrictions. It is the gift of becoming who God created us to be—much like Mandela choosing forgiveness over resentment as he steps into a new life. This reflects Jesus' teaching that true freedom comes through Him, setting us free from sin and restoring our identity as God's beloved.

Write down three things that make you feel most alive and most yourself.

Jesus, teach me to live in the freedom you offer.
Amen.

Read: Exodus 14:13-14

Reflect

Sometimes God frees us by opening a path we never imagined possible, just as South Africa began to move forward in unexpected ways after apartheid. This echoes the biblical promise that God makes a way where there seems to be none, inviting us to trust in God's saving power.

Name one fear that has been keeping you stuck.

God, help me trust the road you are opening.
Amen.

Read: Galatians 5:1

Reflect

Freedom can be frightening because freedom requires responsibility and trust—like the responsibility Mandela carried as he chose reconciliation over revenge. In today's New Testament Epistle (letter), Christ calls us to stand firm in this freedom, not returning to what once enslaved us.

Practice

Journal: "What am I ready to leave behind?"

Prayer

God of freedom, help me release what no longer gives life. Amen.

Read: Genesis 24:58

So they called Rebekah. "Are you willing to go with this man?" they asked her.

And she replied, "Yes, I will go."

Reflect

Rebekah's courage begins with a simple yes, echoing the quiet but powerful decisions that shape history, like Mandela's commitment to unity. This mirrors the biblical call to discipleship, where saying yes to God leads us into transformative purpose.

Practice

Ask: "What invitation from God am I resisting?"

Prayer

Give me courage to say yes to your future. Amen.

[illegible]

FRIDAY, JULY 10

Read: Psalm 118:24

This is the day the Lord has made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Reflect

Freedom allows us to receive each day as a gift, much like the renewed hope seen in the early days of a changing nation. In the Psalms, we are invited to live fully present, trusting that each day is held in God's grace.

Practice

Take a gratitude walk and name ten gifts from God.

Prayer

Thank you for the gift of this day.
Amen

SATURDAY, JULY 11

Sabbath Prayer

God of rest, teach me that my worth is not measured by productivity. Help me receive your gift of Sabbath.

Sabbath Invitation

Rest.
Play.
Nap.
Take a walk.
Turn off notifications.
Receive joy as worship.

SUNDAY, JULY 12

Worship Prayer

God, prepare my heart for worship. Set me free from distractions so I may hear your voice today.

Sabbath Invitation

Attend worship.
Share a meal.
Celebrate God's goodness.
Rest in grace.



WEEKLY QUOTE

"I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended."

- Nelson Mandela

"And they said, 'We will call the young woman and ask her.' And they called Rebekah and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' She said, 'I will.'"

- Genesis 24:57-58 (NRSVue)

WORSHIP CONNECTION:

Freedom is not merely release from something; it is the courage to say yes to God's future.

WHY IT FITS:

This quote captures the movement from external freedom to internal freedom that defines both Mandela's story and Rebekah's journey into God's future. Freedom is not simply release from captivity; it is the responsibility and opportunity to become who God created us to be.

This image shows a full page of blank, white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, typical of notebook or legal stationery. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

WEEK 2 - COURAGE

Genesis 25:19-34 (New Living Translation)

¹⁹ This is the account of the family of Isaac, the son of Abraham. ²⁰ When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean.

²¹ Isaac pleaded with the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was unable to have children. The Lord answered Isaac's prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. ²² But the two children struggled with each other in her womb. So she went to ask the Lord about it. "Why is this happening to me?" she asked.

²³ And the Lord told her, "The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son."

²⁴ And when the time came to give birth, Rebekah discovered that she did indeed have twins!

²⁵ The first one was very red at birth and covered with thick hair like a fur coat. So they named him Esau. ²⁶ Then the other twin was born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

²⁷ As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter. He was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. ²⁸ Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

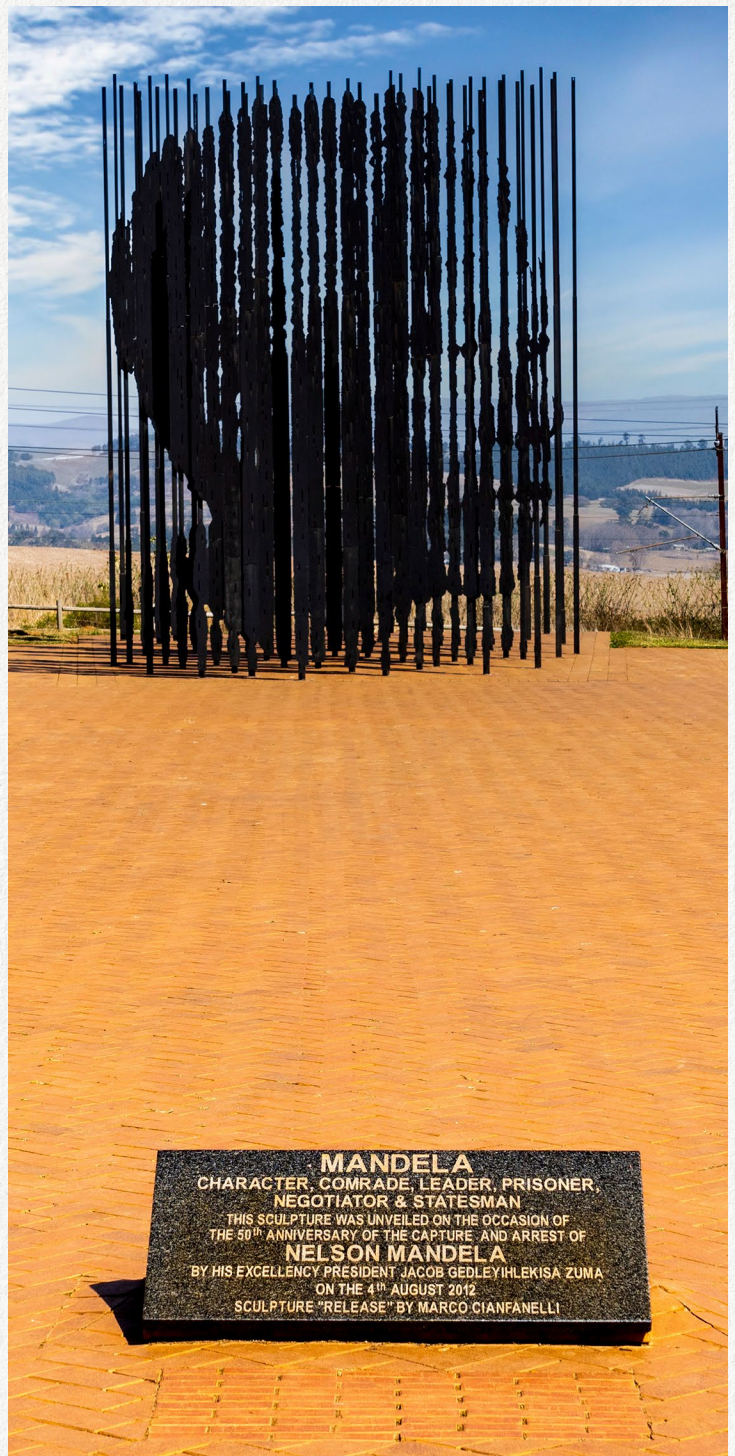
²⁹ One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. ³⁰ Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew!" (This is how Esau got his other name, Edom, which means "red.")

³¹ "All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son."

³² "Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. "What good is my birthright to me now?"

³³ But Jacob said, "First you must swear that your birthright is mine." So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob.

³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left. He showed contempt for his rights as the firstborn.



Weekly Maxim:

My fear does not control me.

Esau trades away tomorrow for today. But in *Invictus*, we see courage not only on the rugby field but in quiet decisions—like Mandela's choice to support the Springboks, risking criticism to build unity. Mandela chooses sacrifice for the future of South Africa. This week explores that kind of courageous faith.

SERMON NOTES

[illegible]

MONDAY, JULY 13

Read: Joshua 1:9

This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Reflect

Courage is not the absence of fear but faithfulness in its presence, much like stepping into leadership when the stakes are high. In the Joshua, we are continually called to be courageous, trusting that God is with us wherever they go.

Practice

Write down one thing requiring courage this week.

Prayer

God, go with me into the places that feel uncertain. Amen.



TUESDAY, JULY 14

Read: Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

Reflect

Every journey requires deciding what we will carry and what we must leave behind, just as the team had to let go of past divisions to move forward together. This reflects the call in Hebrews to fix our eyes on Jesus and run with perseverance, shedding what hinders us.

Practice

Identify one distraction that pulls you away from your calling.

Prayer

Help me run the race before me with endurance. Amen.

DAILY REFLECTIONS



DAILY REFLECTIONS



WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

Read: Genesis 25:29-34

One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew!" (This is how Esau got his other name, Edom, which means "red.")

"All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son."

"Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. "What good is my birthright to me now?"

But Jacob said, "First you must swear that your birthright is mine." So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob.

Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left. He showed contempt for his rights as the firstborn.

Reflect

Esau reminds us that exhaustion can make us shortsighted, a temptation faced by anyone under pressure, including those striving for change. In the Gospel, Jesus invites us to seek lasting nourishment rather than settling for temporary satisfaction.

Practice

Ask: "What am I tempted to trade away?"

Prayer

Give me wisdom for today's decisions. Amen.

THURSDAY, JULY 16

Read: Micah 6:8

No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good,
and this is what he requires of you:
to do what is right, to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God.

Reflect

Courage often looks ordinary: telling the truth, standing with others, showing kindness—like the small but meaningful interactions between teammates learning to trust one another. This aligns with biblical teaching that faithful, humble actions reflect God's heart in everyday life.

Practice

Take one courageous action today.

Prayer

Strengthen my heart for faithfulness. Amen.

DAILY REFLECTIONS

FRIDAY, JULY 17

Read: 2 Timothy 1:7

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

Reflect

Fear may speak loudly, but it does not get the final word, as seen when doubt gives way to determination on the field. In the Gospel, Christ empowers us with a spirit of power, love, and self-control that overcomes fear.

Practice

Write a prayer beginning: "God, I am afraid of..."

Prayer

Replace fear with power, love, and self-control.
Amen.



SATURDAY, JULY 18

Sabbath Prayer

God of peace, remind me that I do not carry the world alone.

Sabbath Invitation

Rest from striving.

Take delight in beauty.

Receive God's love.

SUNDAY, JULY 19

Worship Prayer

God, make me attentive to your voice in worship today.

Sabbath Invitation

Worship.

Rest.

Reconnect with those you love.

DAILY REFLECTIONS

[illegible]

WEEKLY QUOTE

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave person is not one who does not feel afraid, but one who conquers that fear."

- Nelson Mandela

"Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright."

- Genesis 25:34 (NRSVue)

Worship Connection:

Courage chooses what matters most, even when fear, exhaustion, or immediate gratification tempt us otherwise.

Why it fits:

This may be Mandela's most famous quote and aligns perfectly with Esau's story and the call to choose God's future over immediate comfort.

WEEK 3 - RECONCILIATION

Genesis 28:10-19 (New Living Translation)

¹⁰ Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. ¹¹ At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone to rest his head against and lay down to sleep. ¹² As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway.

¹³ At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, "I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. ¹⁵ What's more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you."

¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it!" ¹⁷ But he was also afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!"

¹⁸ The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. ¹⁹ He named that place Bethel (which means "house of God").

Weekly Maxim:
***My enemies do not
determine my future.***

Mandela dreams of unity while others prepare for division. Jacob discovers God in exile.

One of the most powerful themes in *Invictus* is reconciliation—seen in Mandela's efforts to bridge deep divides and in the growing unity between people who once stood apart. This week invites us into that same holy work.



SERMON NOTES

[illegible]

Read: Matthew 5:9

God blesses those who work for peace,
for they will be called the children of God.

Reflect

Peacemaking is not avoiding conflict; it is participating in healing, much like choosing unity over division in a divided nation. In the Gospel, Jesus blesses peacemakers, calling them children of God who reflect His reconciling love.

Practice

Pray for one difficult relationship.

Prayer

Make me an instrument of peace. Amen.



Read: Ephesians 2:14

For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.

Reflect

Christ breaks down walls that divide us, just as barriers began to fall between communities through shared purpose. This directly reflects the Gospel truth that Jesus Himself is our peace, uniting what was once separated.

Practice

Consider: "What walls need to come down in my life?"

Prayer

Build bridges through me. Amen.

DAILY REFLECTIONS

[illegible]

DAILY REFLECTIONS

[illegible]

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

Read: Genesis 28:16

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it!"

Reflect

Jacob discovers God was present even when he felt alone, reminding us that transformation often begins in unseen moments. In the Gospel, we are assured that God is always with us, even when we are unaware of His presence.

Practice

Write about a place where you unexpectedly encountered God.

Prayer

Open my eyes to your presence. Amen.



THURSDAY, JULY 23

Read: Romans 12:18

Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

Reflect

Reconciliation requires humility, courage, and patience—qualities seen in leaders and ordinary people alike striving for peace. This reflects Romans' teaching to pursue peace with others as far as it depends on us.

Practice

Take one small step toward repairing a relationship.

Prayer

Give me courage to pursue peace. Amen.

DAILY REFLECTIONS

[illegible]

FRIDAY, JULY 24

Read: Colossians 3:13

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Reflect

Forgiveness does not erase pain, but it creates space for healing, much like the difficult but necessary work of national healing. In the Gospel, we forgive because Christ has first forgiven us, modeling grace that restores relationships.

Practice

Pray a blessing over someone who has hurt you.

Prayer

Teach me forgiveness that reflects your grace. Amen.



SATURDAY, JULY 25

Sabbath Prayer

God of peace, quiet the noise within me and around me.

Sabbath Invitation

Take a slow walk.
Listen to music.
Notice beauty.
Rest in God's presence.

SUNDAY, JULY 26

Worship Prayer

Prepare my heart to receive your word and your peace.

Sabbath Invitation

Worship.
Rest.
Trust God with what remains unfinished.

WEEKLY QUOTE

"If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner."

- Nelson Mandela

"Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!"

- Genesis 28:16 (NRSVue)

Worship Connection:

Connection: Reconciliation begins when we discover God is already present where we expected division.

Why it fits:

This quote may embody the entire message of *Invictus*. It reflects Mandela's approach to healing a divided nation and beautifully parallels Jacob discovering God's presence in unfamiliar territory.

WEEK 4 - HOPE

Genesis 29:15-28 (New Living Translation)

¹⁵ Laban said to him, "You shouldn't work for me without pay just because we are relatives. Tell me how much your wages should be."

¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters. The older daughter was named Leah, and the younger one was Rachel. ¹⁷ There was no sparkle in Leah's eyes, but Rachel had a beautiful figure and a lovely face. ¹⁸ Since Jacob was in love with Rachel, he told her father, "I'll work for you for seven years if you'll give me Rachel, your younger daughter, as my wife."

¹⁹ "Agreed!" Laban replied. "I'd rather give her to you than to anyone else. Stay and work with me."

²⁰ So Jacob worked seven years to pay for Rachel. But his love for her was so strong that it seemed to him but a few days.

²¹ Finally, the time came for him to marry her. "I have fulfilled my agreement," Jacob said to Laban. "Now give me my wife so I can sleep with her."

²² So Laban invited everyone in the neighborhood and prepared a wedding feast. ²³ But that night, when it was dark, Laban took Leah to Jacob, and he slept with her. ²⁴ (Laban had given Leah a servant, Zilpah, to be her maid.)

²⁵ But when Jacob woke up in the morning—it was Leah! "What have you done to me?" Jacob raged at Laban. "I worked seven years for Rachel! Why have you tricked me?"

²⁶ "It's not our custom here to marry off a younger daughter ahead of the firstborn," Laban replied.

²⁷ "But wait until the bridal week is over; then we'll give you Rachel, too—provided you promise to work another seven years for me."

²⁸ So Jacob agreed to work seven more years. A week after Jacob had married Leah, Laban gave him Rachel, too.



Weekly Maxim:

God's future is larger than my circumstances.

Mandela understands that reconciliation is slow work. Jacob learns God's promises continue unfolding through setbacks and delays. The final scenes of *Invictus*, especially the Rugby World Cup victory, reveal **hope that has been built over time**—a hope rooted in perseverance, unity, and vision. This week reflects on that enduring hope in Christ.

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DAILY REFLECTIONS

MONDAY, JULY 28

Read: Romans 15:13

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Reflect

Hope is not wishful thinking. Hope is confidence in God's faithfulness, like believing in a future that is not yet fully visible. In Romans, this hope is grounded in the power of the Holy Spirit who fills us with joy and peace.

Practice

List three places where you still see signs of hope.

Prayer

Fill me with joy and peace in believing. Amen.

TUESDAY, JULY 29

Read: Lamentations 3:21-23

Yet I still dare to hope
when I remember this:

The faithful love of the Lord never ends!
His mercies never cease.
Great is his faithfulness;
his mercies begin afresh each morning.

Reflect

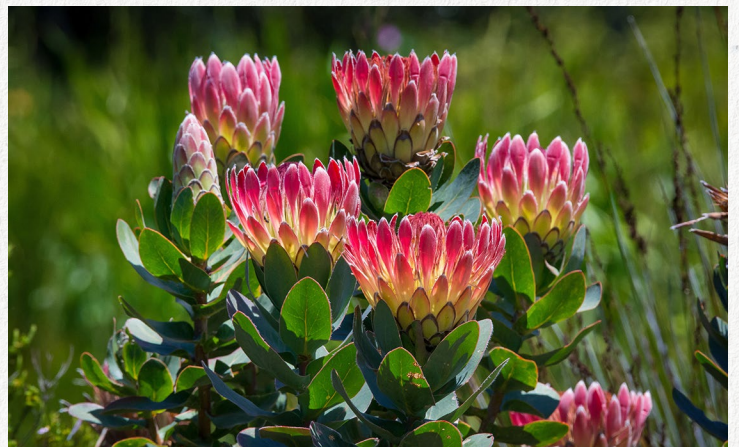
God's mercies arrive each morning whether we notice them or not, just as small daily changes can lead to lasting transformation. This reflects the Gospel truth that God's steadfast love renews us day by day.

Practice

Begin the day by naming one new mercy.

Prayer

Thank you for your faithfulness. Amen.



DAILY REFLECTIONS



WEDNESDAY, JULY 30

Read: Psalm 27:13-14

Yet I am confident I will see the Lord's goodness
while I am here in the land of the living.

Wait patiently for the Lord.

Be brave and courageous.

Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.

Reflect

Waiting is one of the hardest spiritual disciplines, much like the long journey toward unity and healing. In the Psalms, we are encouraged to wait on the Lord with courage, trusting in His timing.

Practice

Where is God asking you to wait faithfully?

Prayer

Strengthen my heart while I wait. Amen.

THURSDAY, JULY 31

Read: Isaiah 40:31

But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength.

They will soar high on wings like eagles.

They will run and not grow weary.

They will walk and not faint.

Reflect

Hope renews exhausted people, just as perseverance can carry individuals and communities through difficult seasons. In Isaiah, those who hope in the Lord are promised renewed strength to rise again.

Practice

Take ten quiet minutes without screens or distractions.

Prayer

Renew my strength today. Amen.

Read: Revelation 21:5

Reflect

Practice

Prayer

Sabbath Prayer

Sabbath Invitation

Light a candle.

Share a meal.

Take a nap.

Worship Prayer

Sabbath Invitation

Worship joyfully.

Rest deeply.

DAILY REFLECTIONS

[illegible]

DAILY REFLECTIONS

WEEKLY QUOTE

"It always seems impossible until it's done."

- Nelson Mandela

"They seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her."

- Genesis 29:20 (NRSVue)

Worship Connection:

Hope sustains us in the long work of love, justice, and reconciliation.

Why it fits:

This is perhaps the perfect closing quote for the series. Jacob waits years for fulfillment, Mandela waits decades for freedom, and the church waits faithfully for God's kingdom to come in fullness.

FINAL BLESSING

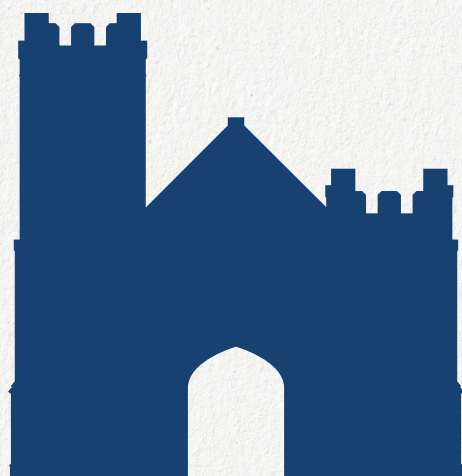
May you walk in **freedom** that breaks chains you once thought unmovable.

May you rise with **courage** that steadies your steps even in the face of fear.

May you become a living bridge of **reconciliation**, carrying peace into places of division.

May you hold fast to **hope** that burns like a steady flame, even in the darkest night.

And as you go, may you know deep in your bones that in Christ, every ending is held in resurrection, every struggle is gathered into grace, and the final word over your life is victory, life, and unshakable love. Your faith cannot be defeated!



ATLANTA FIRST
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Jasmine R. Smothers, Lead Pastor



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