

52 DEVOTIONS FOR  
NAVIGATING THROUGH TRAUMA

SEEDS  
*of* RACIAL  
HEALING

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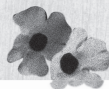
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# INTRODUCTION

*You have been given a new birth. It was from a seed that cannot die.*

*This new life is from the Word of God which lives forever.*

1 PETER 1:23 (NLV)

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**We are born from a seed** that cannot die. 1 Peter 1:23 speaks the truth about who we really are.

Although systemic racism, racial trauma, and relational dysfunction deny it, Black, Indigenous, Latino/a, Asian, Pacific Islanders, and other folk of color (BIPOC) are created in the image of God. Furthermore, we are not a monolith. We come from particular cultures and ethnicities and have similarities and differences in how we experience life and community. This devotional invites us to consider our race and culture as we encounter various seed metaphors that highlight things we have in common. Some explicitly refer to seeds of racial healing and blessing sown by God, while others are seeds of lies, distortions, and trauma sown into our lives and communities.

One thing BIPOC have in common is how metaphorically noxious seeds continue to be sown into our lives, families, and communities as they have for generations. These seeds produce weeds that spring up and try to choke out new growth of hope, joy, healing, and perseverance. Racism takes a toll on us. We cry out in prayer and protest bias, racist assaults, immigration crack-downs, the erasure of our history, and miscarriages of justice. Some moments may also tap into memories of past and current struggles. In 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (NIV), we read how “we are hard



pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.” However, at any given moment we may feel like we’re being crushed and abandoned.

This is how I felt after signing the contract to write this devotional. Its focus was to help BIPOC folk walk through daily life more aware of God—embracing life and pursuing healing and justice—while still confronting interpersonal racism, bias, and systemic oppression. I was to submit it to my publisher later in the year. Then in June of that year, my dear mother, called Momae, passed away. While her health had steadily declined over many years, I wasn’t fully in touch with how I walked through each day carrying anticipatory grief. I knew that losing mom would happen, but then again, I didn’t. Along the way I felt profound exhaustion, waves of sadness, and yet inexplicable joy.

Similarly, so much of racial healing for BIPOC is about addressing racial trauma, anticipatory and other forms of grief and injustice, while experiencing pockets of joy and celebration. I’ve been on a three-year journey to complete this devotional. It contains seeds of racial healing that are not only for you but also for me. I am processing my own grief and racial trauma while struggling to stay the course as I feel the pull to be more, do more, say more, and always be “on.” The same may be true for you. Additionally, we may be expected to educate everyone about race or tend to other folks’ pain, grief, and terror—all the while carrying our own. Then occasionally, we’re able to rejoice over small and large victories such as personal, emotional, or communal breakthroughs or convictions. We hunger for justice, persevere, but remain deeply in need of rest.



We are not alone in the fight. Psalm 69:32-33 (NRSV) tells us,  
Let the oppressed see it and be glad;  
you who seek God, let your hearts revive.  
For the LORD hears the needy,  
and does not despise his own who are in bonds.

Our God is ever present, and the Scriptures also emphasize the importance of other folk. Many of us know the importance of communal care over rugged individualism. Although you may choose to go through the *Seeds of Racial Healing* devotional solo, I suggest inviting a trusted friend or small group to join you. We need safe-enough, trustworthy, and indispensable sisters and brothers in Christ called by God to pray, love, walk, and work alongside us with a tool in one hand and a spiritual weapon in the other.

In this devotional I hope you will find encouragement and moments to pause, heal, hope, reset, revive, and respond. Like every plant that starts as a seed deep in the earth, hidden from public view, growth is literally and figuratively underground. Moreover, after the seed sprouts, it will go through cycles for the rest of its life. Each year, it will endure a period when it must stop working, shut down its processes, shed its outer coat, turn inward, rest, and preserve itself. Sometimes that period is relatively gentle, but often it is difficult, with intense cold and storms that test its ability to persevere. If the seed endures, it develops perseverance. Then it returns to work in the spring, preparing to sprout, then bloom.

As you deeply engage these fifty-two devotions, may you begin to heal, dream again, and perhaps for the first time hear God's plan for your life and the lives of those in your community. It can

be immensely helpful and healing to keep a journal to record your journey.

The *Seeds of Racial Healing* devotional consists of five themes that highlight issues addressed on this journey: the sower and the seeds; the soil of your story; the weeds among the wheat; becoming grown; and sow, tend, and harvest. Each theme has ten to twelve devotions that address the theme and incorporate Bible verses and personal or scriptural stories that encourage and challenge. Each devotion concludes with a personal or communal question to contemplate and a listening or breath prayer. There may also be a word of encouragement gleaned from the Scriptures or heard while I engaged in listening prayer. Finally, there may be specific creative practices or action steps to take. My prayer is that with each devotion, we embrace more of the truth that we are beloved BIPOC, children of God, born again from an imperishable seed.





## PART 1

# The Sower and the Seeds

### Days 1-10

*Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.*

MATTHEW 13:3-9



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DAY 1



# IMPERISHABLE SEED

*Those who plant in tears  
will harvest with shouts of joy.  
They weep as they go to plant their seed,  
but they sing as they return with the harvest.*

PSALM 126:5-6

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As a child, I was clueless about how our Nana and Granddaddy held tightly onto their farm on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. They faced obstacles, including systemic racism, that prevented them from getting a fair market price for their crops. They were at the mercy of the fickleness of harsh weather that quickly destroys a fragile seedling or the entire crop. Each year in the heat of summer, my family descended upon our grandparents' farm. Every day after breakfast, my siblings and I raced down dusty roads. Out of breath, thirsty, and hungry at the strawberry patch, we grabbed as much as we could eat. It was a mystery which strawberry seeds planted in the ground endured to become what they were meant to be. We simply enjoyed the sweetness of the fruit when the crop was good or were disappointed when it wasn't.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus makes an excellent metaphor for some of the above- and below-ground challenges that seeds face. While the parable of the sower is about the kingdom of God, notice it doesn't focus on the condition of the seed. Just like the seed in the parable, we are influenced by the soil or environment we are planted in. We may live, work, and worship in environments that we assumed were safe enough only to discover they



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were not. We've had experiences that caused pain and racial trauma. Our stories may include facing opposition over which we lashed out, remained silent, or were silenced.

There's a saying in activist circles: "They tried to bury us. They didn't know we were seeds." Meditate on 1 Peter 1:23 (NLV): "You have been given a new birth. It was from a seed that cannot die. This new life is from the Word of God which lives forever." This is an essential verse that helps us embark on this healing journey. This verse calls us to remember who and whose we are. We are born of imperishable seed. This is the truth of who we really are, and our lives matter to God. We see how a plant's seeds are dispersed via the wind, water, animals, people, explosion, and fire. These seeds then land on ground and may grow into new plants. However, unlike these average seeds that are subject to the environment, elements, and nature, we cannot be destroyed. Although the enemy of our souls would cause us to doubt this truth, we may be pressed down, persecuted, and struck down, but we are not destroyed. Although we face ongoing frustrations and assaults that try to sway our attention from what the Lord has called us to, all is not lost. In the Scriptures we read stories of the power, sovereignty, and faithfulness of God, through whom we have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable. On this journey called life, the Lord is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. So we lament—"a way of seeing, standing, and wrestling or arguing with God, and thus a way of hoping in the midst of ruins." Prayers of lament help to keep our eyes on the Lord who hears our every cry. Then we may see how God is woven throughout the stories of our lives. Amid past and current experiences of racism, we can look for the



Lord who fights for us and brings light and love even in the smallest ways.

**A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT** In prayer I heard, “Trust me, I have a greater agenda of healing your trauma and restoring your peace with the gift of my peace. Take quiet moments to rest and reflect with me. I will speak to you during those times to bring clarity and vision for the now and new seasons of your life.”

**REFLECT** Are you having difficulty trusting and believing that healing, justice, or both are possible for us? If so, when you are ready, honestly tell the Lord how you feel, lament, and ask for help to take the next step.

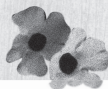
### PRAYER

But you, Sovereign LORD,  
help me for your name's sake;  
out of the goodness of your love, deliver me.  
For I am poor and needy,  
and my heart is wounded within me.  
(Psalm 109:21-22 NIV)

Show me where the soil in my life is hard, rocky, thorny, or fertile. As I lament, help me trust you to sow seeds that revive me as I heal from racial trauma. In Jesus' name, amen.



DAY 2



## THE SOWER

*He [or she] who watches the wind will not plant his seeds.  
And he [or she] who looks at the clouds will not gather the food.  
Just as you do not know the path of the wind or how  
the bones are made of a child yet to be born, so you  
do not know the work of God Who makes all things.*

ECCLESIASTES 11:4-5 (NLV)

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**Just as the earth has its cycle and seasons**, so do we. In the Northeast of the United States, the air is frigid cold, Paris is gloomy and gray, while in Johannesburg, South Africa, the sun shines bright. No matter where you are on this planet, at a moment's notice the temperature can change, or there's a torrential downpour, a tornado, or a balmy breeze. Such is it with us. The world cries out for justice, balance, and order, and we also attempt to find our own equilibrium. But apart from God, this is momentary or futile, although we try our hardest. Although we were fearfully and wonderfully made, knit together in our mother's wombs (see Psalm 139:13-14), we are also children of God desperately in need of rest.

So many of us are processing racial trauma and grief in life and in our engagement in justice work. We've all felt the frustration of sowing what we thought was promising seed. We hoped for transformation only to find we moved two steps forward then one step back. We've seen incremental change but also backlash. Many of us have labored long and hard, but the pain of past and present racism is real. It has affected our nervous systems, hormones,



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minds, and bodies. We can't fully relax, then another racist incident creates this endless racial trauma loop. We bear unhealed wounds, traumatic racial histories, and still we must deal with microaggressions and almost daily assaults on our dignity and character. The enormity of the pain and terror in and around us feels like a gray cloud hovering above. Are we reluctant to sow the seeds that God has given us because we are fixated on the clouds? Honestly, it's challenging to continue to sow with little to no guarantee of success. Ecclesiastes 11:4-5 reminds us God controls whether the seed will germinate or how it will keep growing. As we read in Matthew 13:3-9, it may seem that God haphazardly scatters seed and doesn't seem concerned about how, when, and where it's sown. But our God is the Creator, the Sower of good seed, and the Giver of life.

I remember the night in 2000 when we watched a TV special about how HIV/AIDS was devastating South Africa. I cried throughout the show. In 2001 we joined a racially diverse mission team to Johannesburg, South Africa, to serve those impacted by HIV/AIDS. After a week of ministry, we celebrated at a game reserve. In this stunning beauty, we saw racism rear its ugly head as the Black waiters faced humiliation from the White lodge guests. There was also racial conflict within our mission team. I felt a profound sense of the brutality and racial trauma that Black South Africans had and were still facing. I felt a sense of Jesus' heart for South Africa and her people. Just as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, I (uncharacteristically) publicly wept for the men at the lodge and for Black South Africans. Then I had to confront the racism on our team. I came away questioning if I could ever really trust White people. I wept for myself, our team, and Black folk back



home. I cried for hours. The next day, we left Johannesburg. I was depleted but felt a prompting in my heart: *One day you will return.* Although seeds were planted that week, it took five years before we moved.

At some point we all may find the sower has unexpectedly planted us where we can experience deeper trust. God helps us to thrive while we wait or actively pursue change wherever we are planted. As our seeds are sown, we can entrust the results to the Lord. And along the way, the Holy Spirit gives insight. We begin to unearth truths about racism and racial trauma: how they affect us, where the roots are, and what our current triggers are. Increasingly we experience an undergirding of peace and reminders that God, the Sower, is continually at work delivering us, healing us, and encouraging new life to take root.

**A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT** In prayer I heard, “I give you the waters of refreshment for the dry and weary places in your heart and mind. Even triggers and trauma will not stop you from persevering in love and celebrating life more fully.”

**REFLECT** How can you face your triggers with Jesus? Are there people who will listen to your whole story?

**BREATH PRAYER** Silently or aloud, speak this truth: The Lord is—merciful and compassionate. Then to a count of four while inhaling, silently repeat the words “The Lord is.” Hold your breath to a count of four, and then slowly exhale to a count of four, silently repeating the words “merciful and compassionate.”



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