

SABBATH SUNDAY

JANUARY 28, 2024

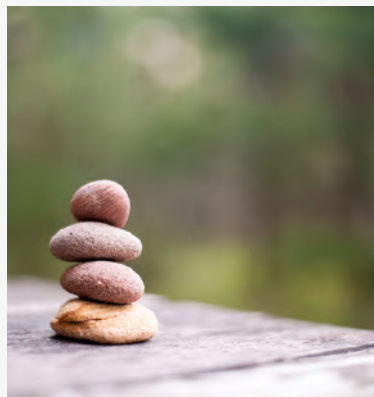
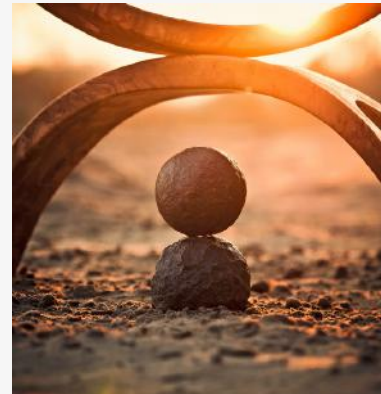


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"A great benefit of Sabbath keeping is that we learn to let God take care of us - not by becoming passive and lazy, but in the freedom of giving up our feeble attempts to be God in our own lives."

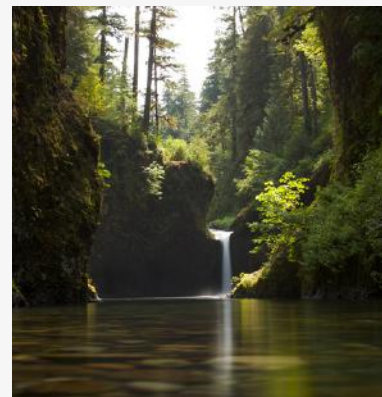
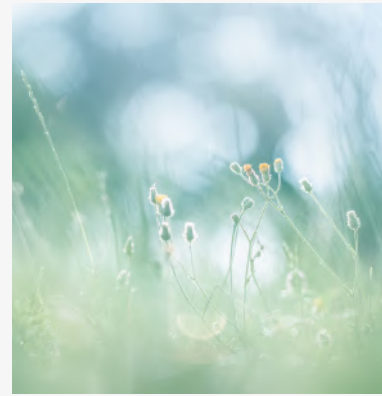
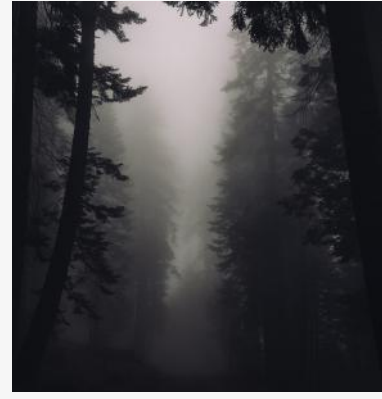
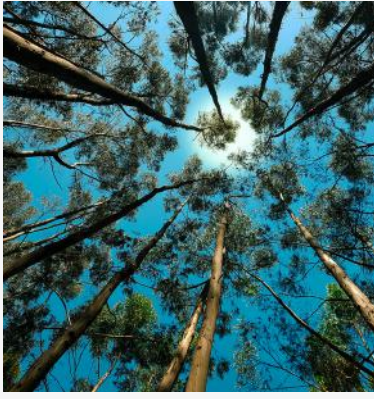
—Marva J. Dawn—



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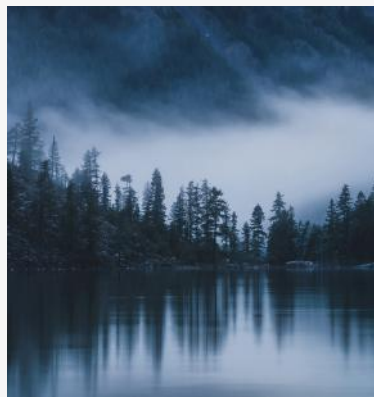
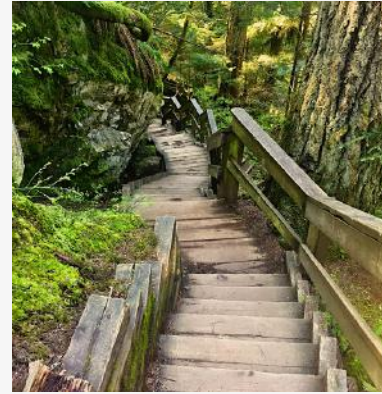
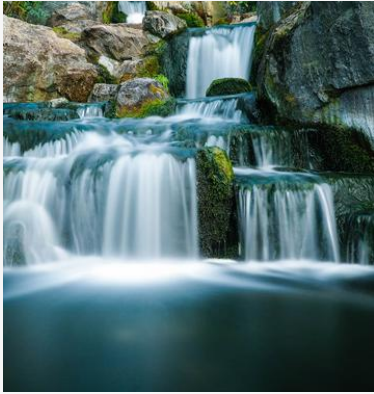
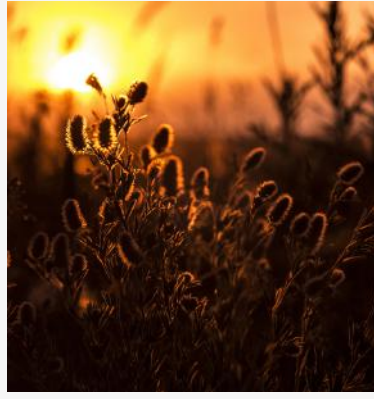
Patrick Miller once wrote that the "Fourth Commandment, (to remember the Sabbath), has as its premise that God rested on the seventh day."



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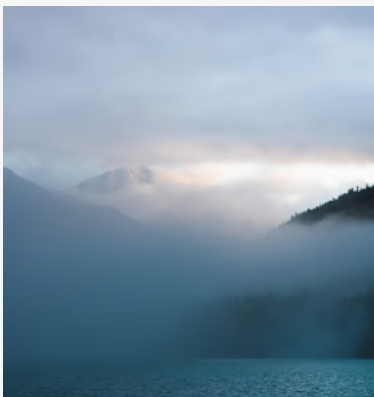
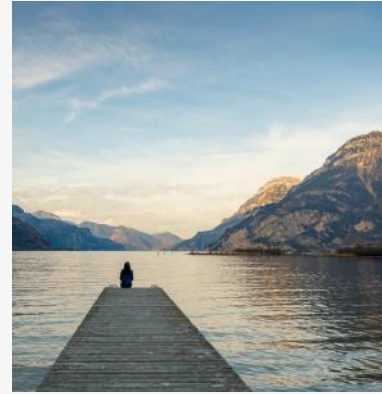
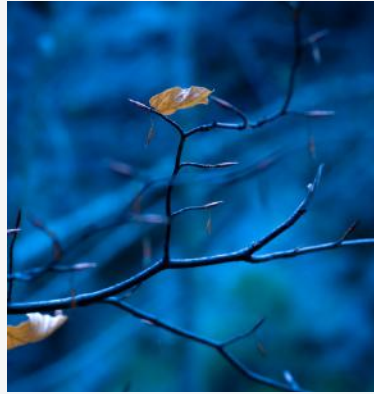
That refers back to the God of the first three commandments. The Sabbath command is that "you shall rest, and your neighbor shall rest." And obviously the last six commandments are all about the neighbor.



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So, in the Sabbath, what the God of the first three commandments and the neighbor of the last six have in common, is that they are both at rest. Neither of them are driven by excessive desire.

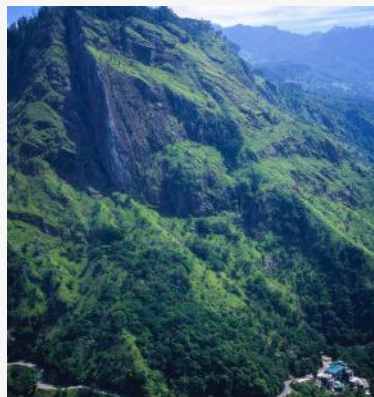
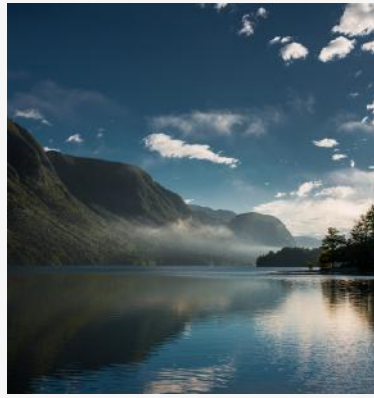


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There is a phrase in the book of Colossians, which says, "Do not practice greed, which is idolatry" [Colossians 3:5].

"Greed" is sometimes translated "covetousness."



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So you've got in this verse the first two commandments, which are about idolatry, and then the Tenth Commandment about greed. It forms a nice envelope. Sabbath is a break with our idolatries and a break with our greed.

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Sabbath is an invitation to mark time differently.

We have holidays like Christmas and Easter, even seasons like Advent and Lent, among others. But because of Sabbath, we also have the opportunity to do this daily, remembering the last Sabbath and anticipating the next one.

When I think about Sabbath there are four passages that come to mind: one in Genesis, one in Exodus, one in Isaiah, and one in Matthew.

In the creation story of Genesis 1 (and continuing into the first couple verses of chapter 2), God makes the world in a particular way.

Notes

There's separating light from darkness. There's separating the sky from the ocean. There's separating the water from dry land. Then there's making celestial bodies to order the light and darkness. Then there's making birds and fish to order the sky and ocean.

Then there's animals and humans to order the land. And then on the seventh day, there's Sabbath. And Sabbath orders the whole thing.

There's completion.

Everything in its right place.

Notes

The narrative journey in Genesis 1 is from chaos to order, and Sabbath is the great party celebrating that everything is now where it's supposed to be.

Life in order.

When God then provides the Ten Commandments, celebrating Sabbath is included as one of these most basic guidelines for living like a human being in God's presence. In fact, it gets more words than anything else in the Ten Commandments.

Notes

For a ragtag group of slaves who knew nothing but making bricks day after day after day, every day was the same. What a radical gift of grace to hear that work is done in six days, and then one day is offered to God.

Work has a finish line.

Life is not about work.

Life is not about accomplishments.

Life is not about getting credit.

Life is not about power.

Life is not about status.

Life is about Sabbath.

Notes

In Isaiah 58, the prophet weaves spiritual disciplines, social justice, physical healing, and communal restoration all together leading up to Sabbath. Sabbath, again, is all of life put in the right order.

And then there's Jesus. In Matthew 12, the gospel writer presents two back-to-back scenarios where Jesus clashes with the religious institution about Sabbath. (It includes the mic-drop moment where Jesus proclaims: "I am lord of the Sabbath.")

Notes

The Pharisees define the Sabbath by don'ts, Jesus illustrates powerfully that Sabbath is for restoring the humanity of people.

Hungry disciples can eat. A disabled man is healed. And when the Pharisees protest, Jesus heals everybody. It's one of his more defiant gestures towards the establishment in the gospels.

And bookending these two stories are these two statements, one attributed Jesus, one to the prophet Isaiah that spurs the gospel writer to think of Jesus:

Notes

Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

...

He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle.

Notes

I'd like to think that the "rest" that Jesus talks about here is connected to the rest of Sabbath. This is a "rest" that's like defaulting back to factory settings of what it means to be a human before the damage of sin and death.

Remembering and celebrating Sabbath is about taking us back to the very beginning of the story, about restoring our humanity that thrives in God's presence.

Notes

If we think of this "rest" as escape from the world, from our obligations, we've got it all wrong. Sabbath is much bigger than escape or rejuvenation or recharge. "Rest" as it's talked about in Scripture with Sabbath is more about completion. It's the reward of the work.

Sabbath is not about me.

It's about God and God's restored presence to us all.

Notes

Over time, I've concluded that the art of taking a Sabbath isn't about following a pre-determined list of do's and don't's. That's how the Pharisees get into such trouble with Jesus, after all. Instead, it is about making the time to rest and say,

Enough.

Enough WORKING

Enough CLEANING

Enough CREATING

Enough SIMPLIFYING

Enough CONNECTING

Notes

Marva Dawn suggests four means of engaging Sabbath....

#1 [CEASING]

I recognize things in my life that distract me from being present.

#2 [RESTING]

I want to think bigger than just what brings rest to me. What brings rest to the family that I belong to?

And even bigger, what brings rest to our whole community?

Notes

#3 [EMBRACING]

Unplugging is good when we use the freedom of it to plug into better things. What new invitations will Sabbath place before you?

#4 [FEASTING]

Sabbath is above all, a celebratory expression of faith. It is for enjoying the gifts that God has given us.

"Most of the things we need to be most fully alive never come in busyness. They grow in rest."

- Mark Buchanan -

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For most of us, the last month of 2023 was a whirlwind.

It's hard to pause long enough to remember what happened in 2023: the good, the bad, the hard, the beautiful, the heartbreaking. But no matter what kind of year you've had, we've all changed, grown, and learned a thing or two.

And it's worth the effort to intentionally acknowledge those things.

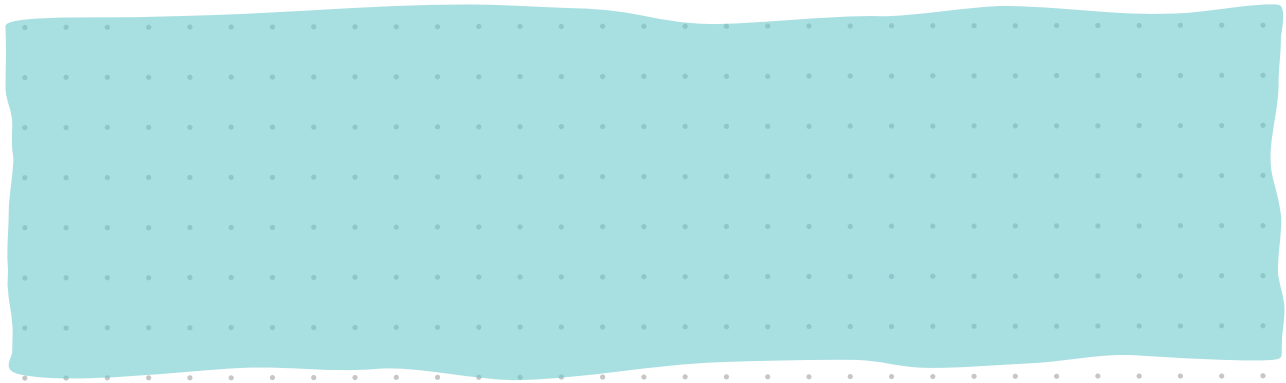
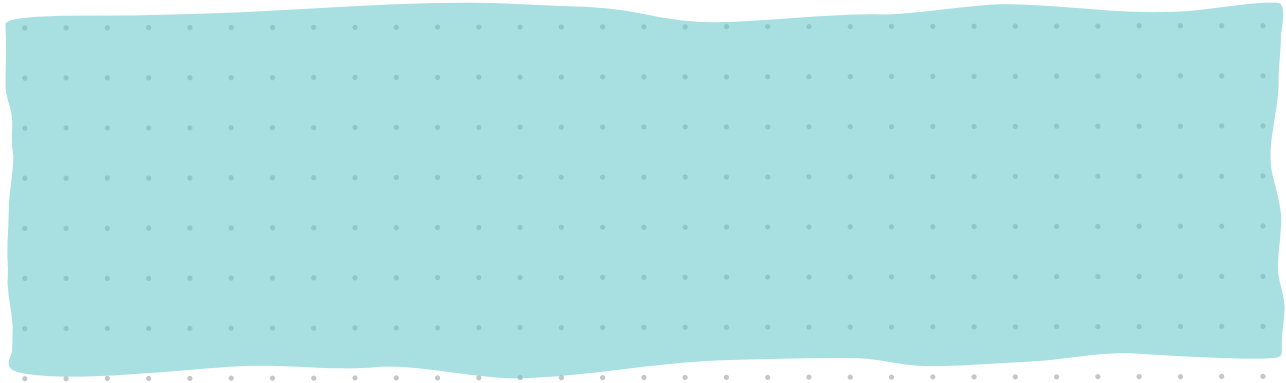
So, here you'll find a few helpful reflection questions to wrap up 2023 and lean toward 2024.

You can write them down in a journal or share them out loud over a meal.

Or, you can take few minutes alone for prayerful reflection.

1. What is a movie or book you really enjoyed this past year?

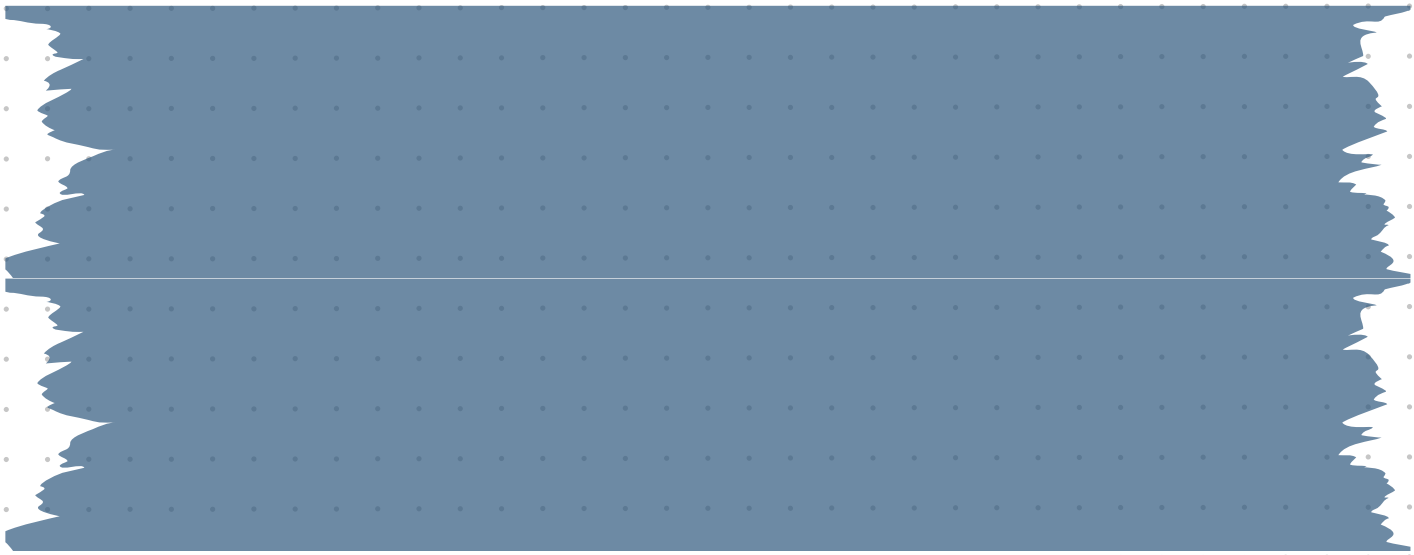
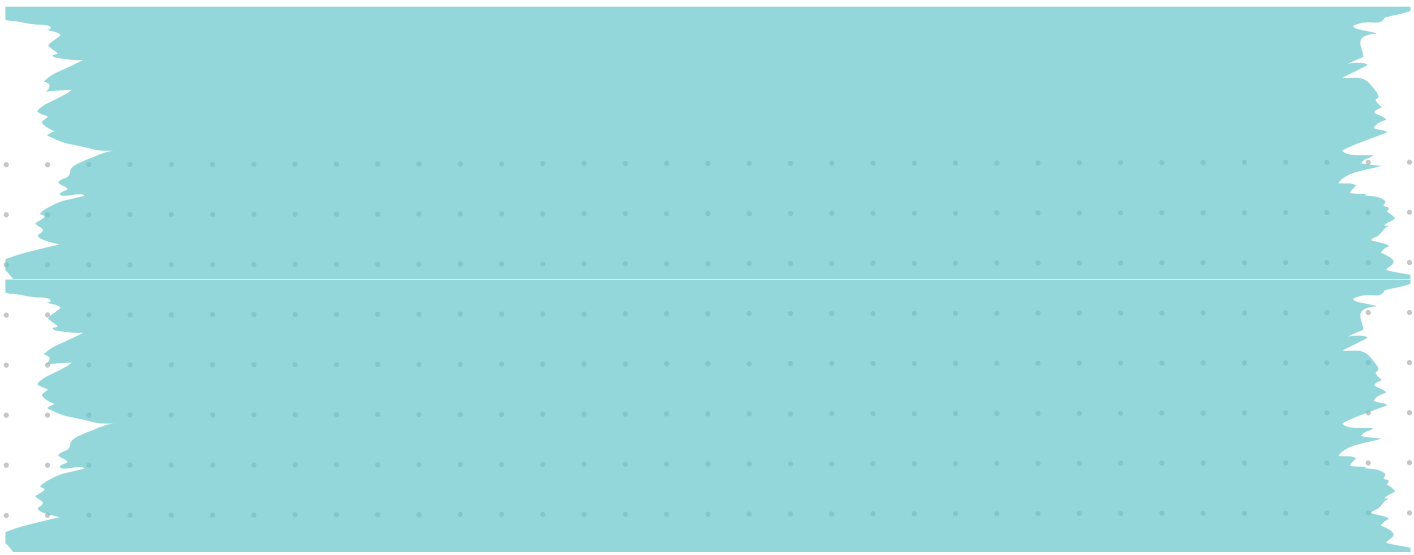
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2. What are 2 things you enjoyed doing this year?

3. What did you accomplish or do this year that you're proud of?

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4. In what ways did you grow spiritually, emotionally, and physically this year?

5. Share how God showed up in your life in 2023.



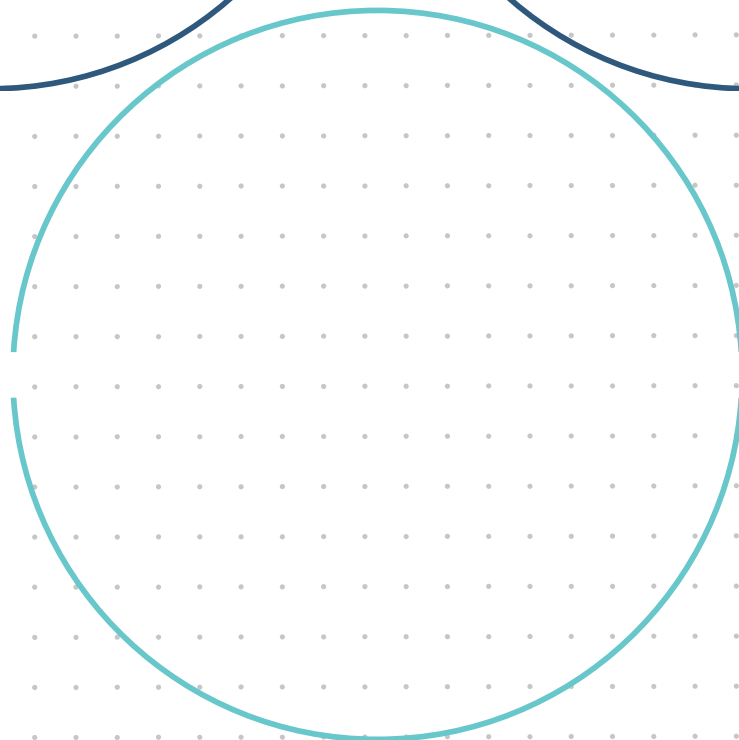
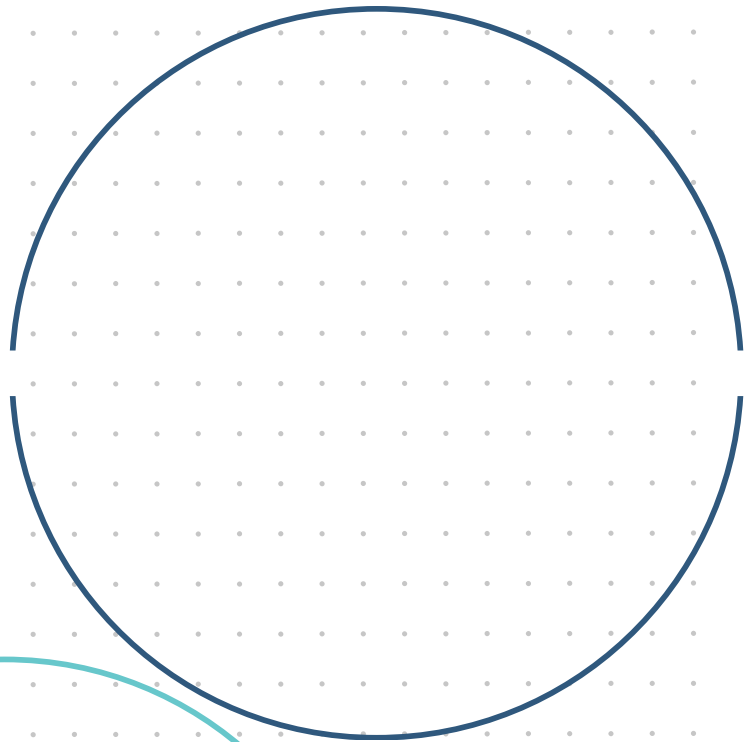
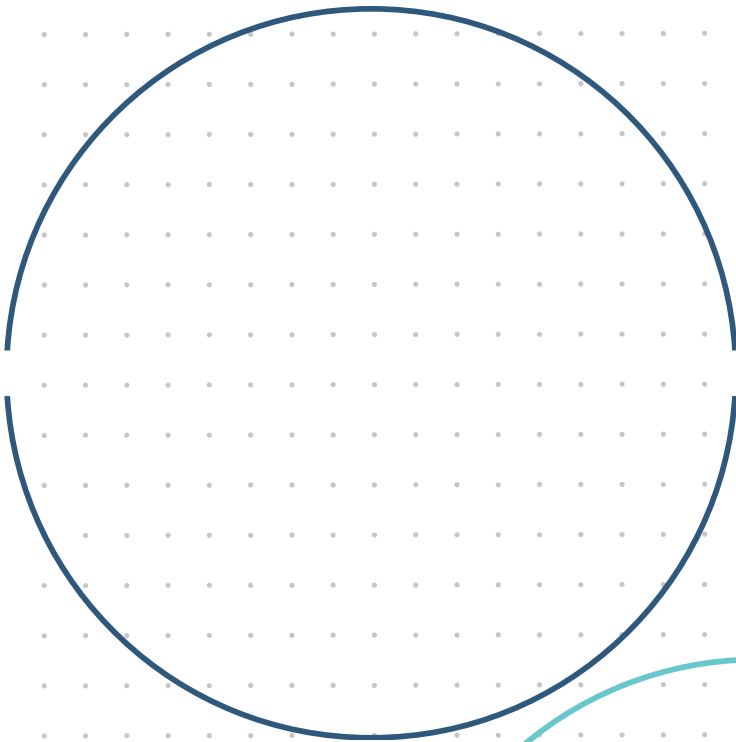
6. What is something you did this past year to help someone?

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7. What was something challenging you experienced this past year?

8. Name 3 specific things you were grateful for this year.



9. What's one hard lesson you learned this year?

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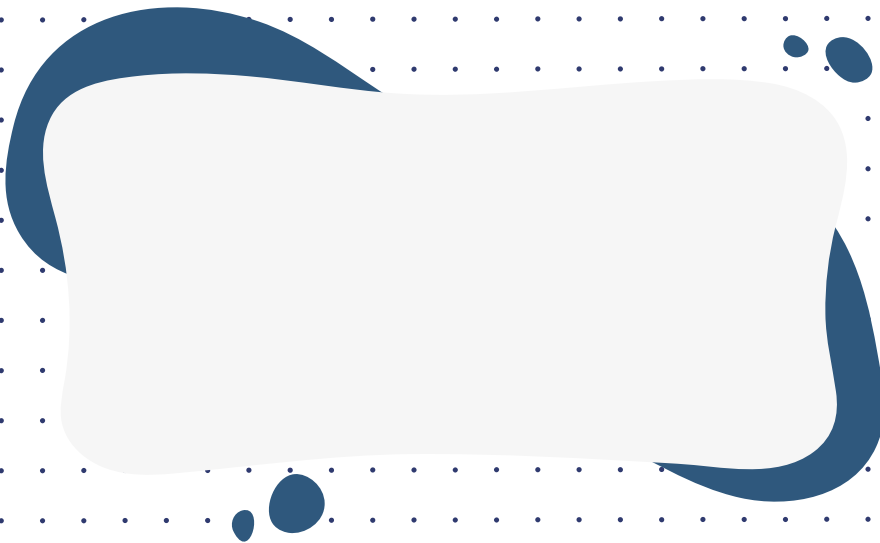
10. Pick three words
to describe 2023

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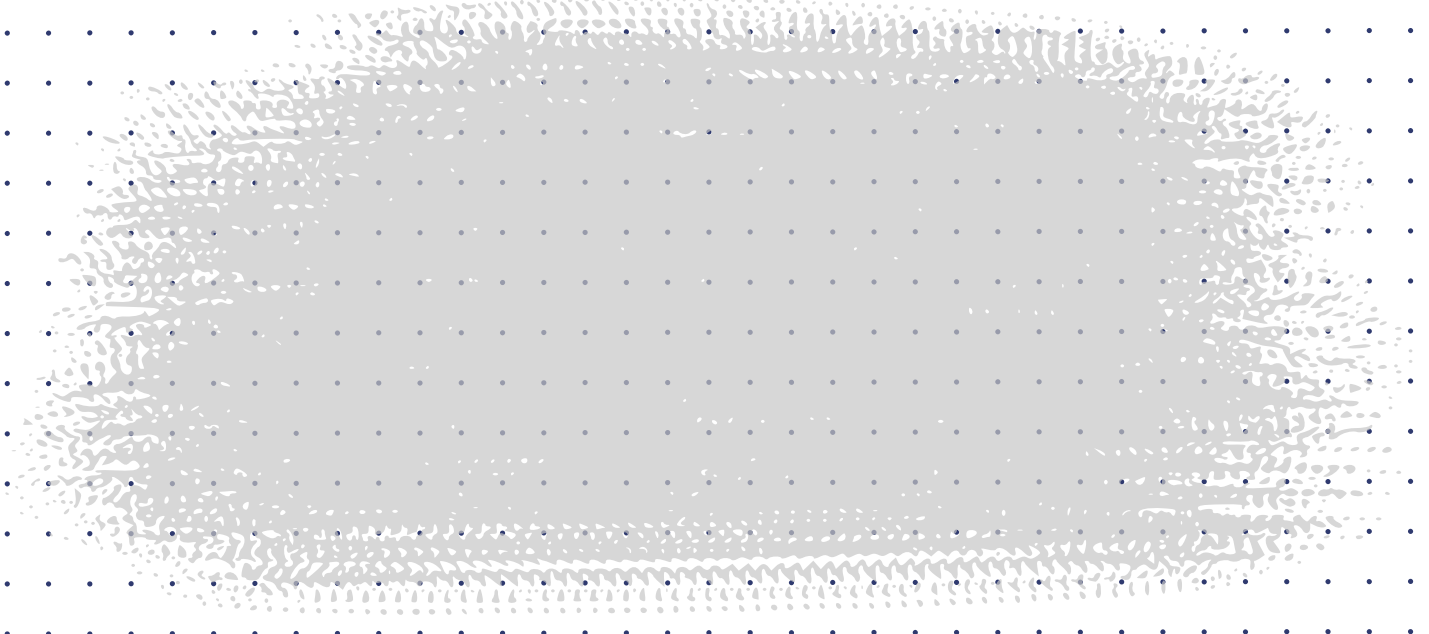
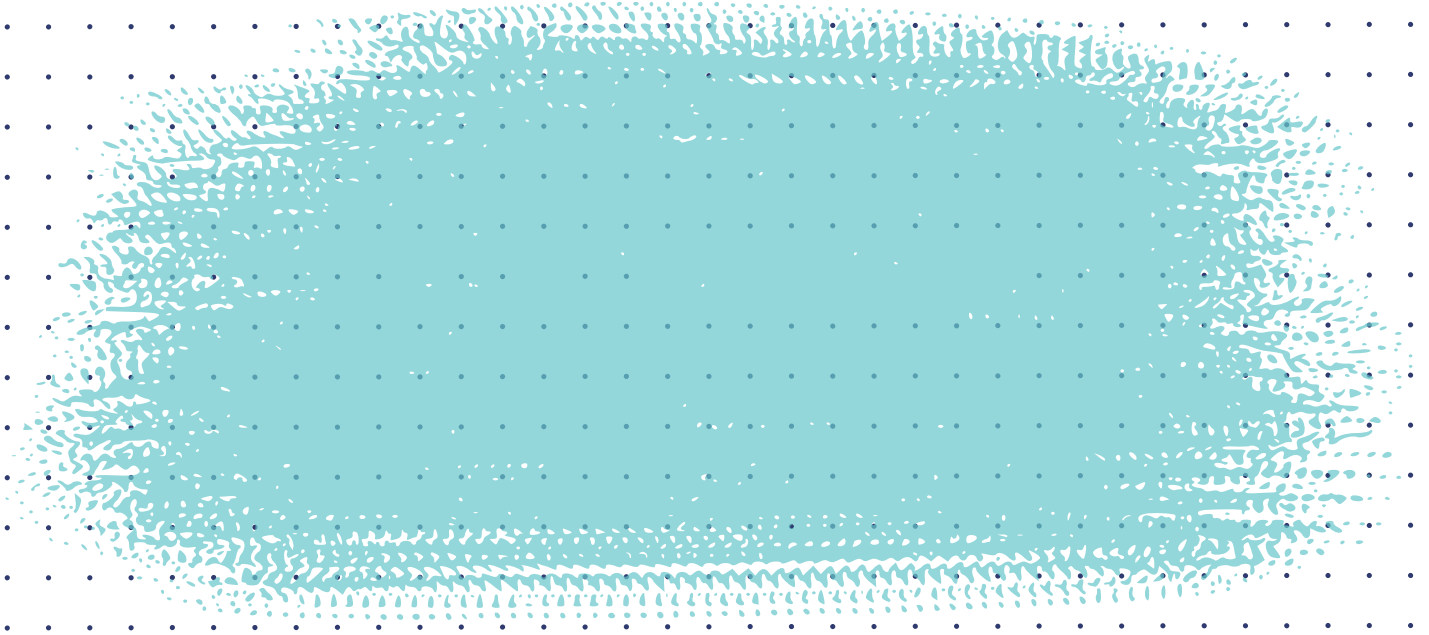
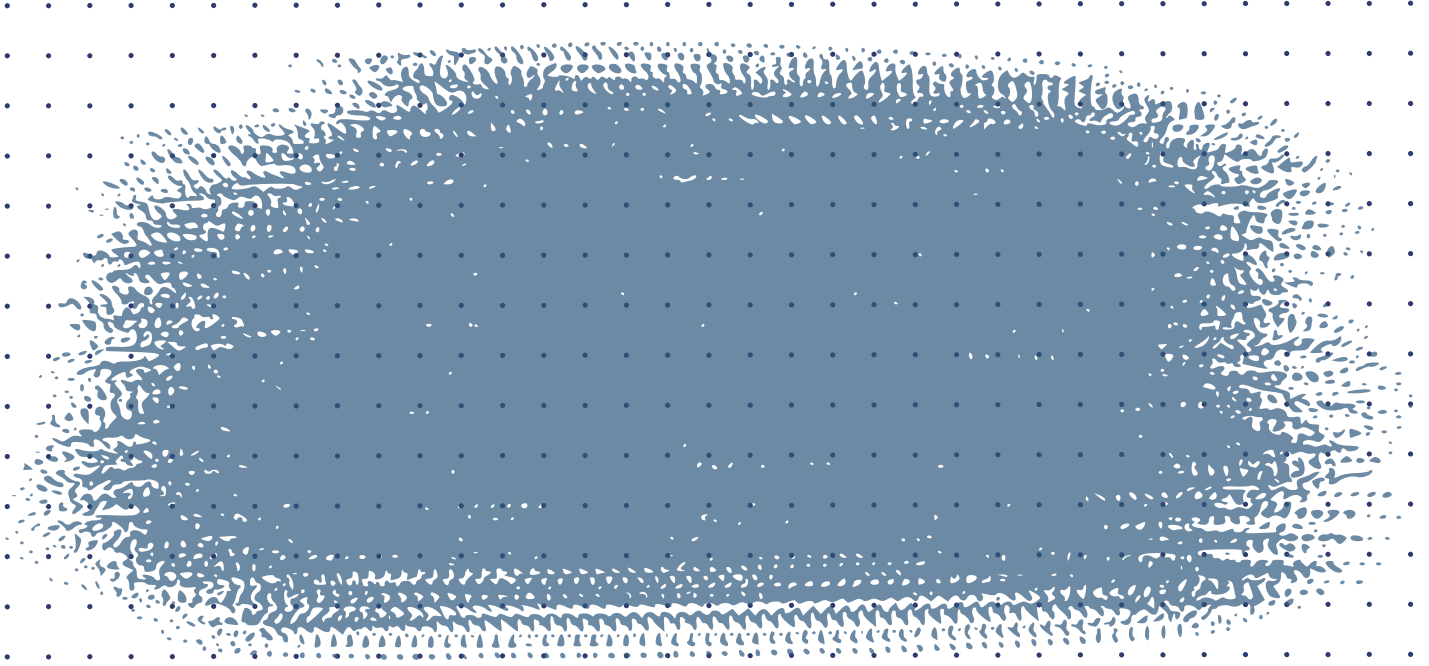
11. Who were your most valuable relationships with this past year?



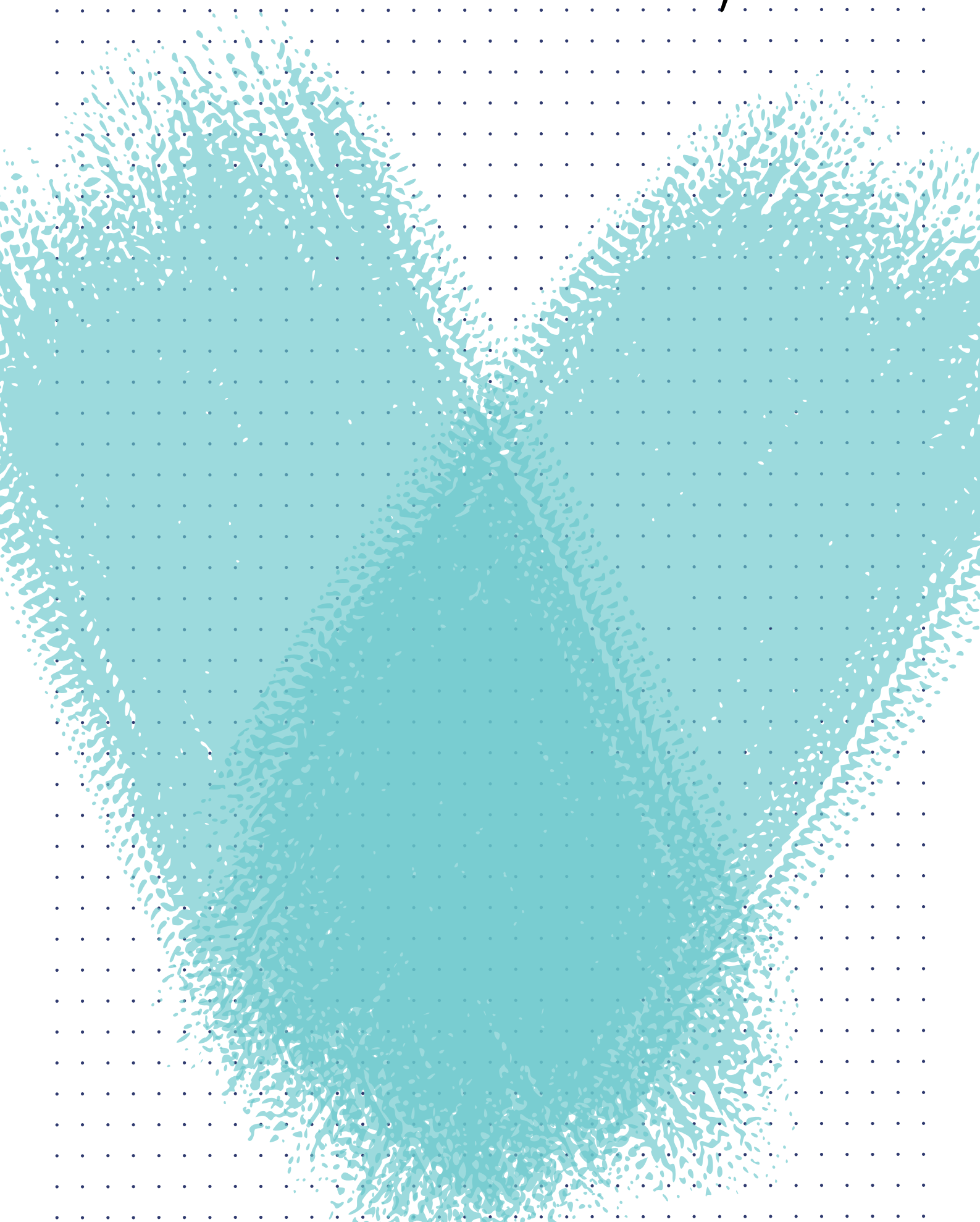
12. What did you pray about
this year?

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13. What were your lowest moments in 2023?



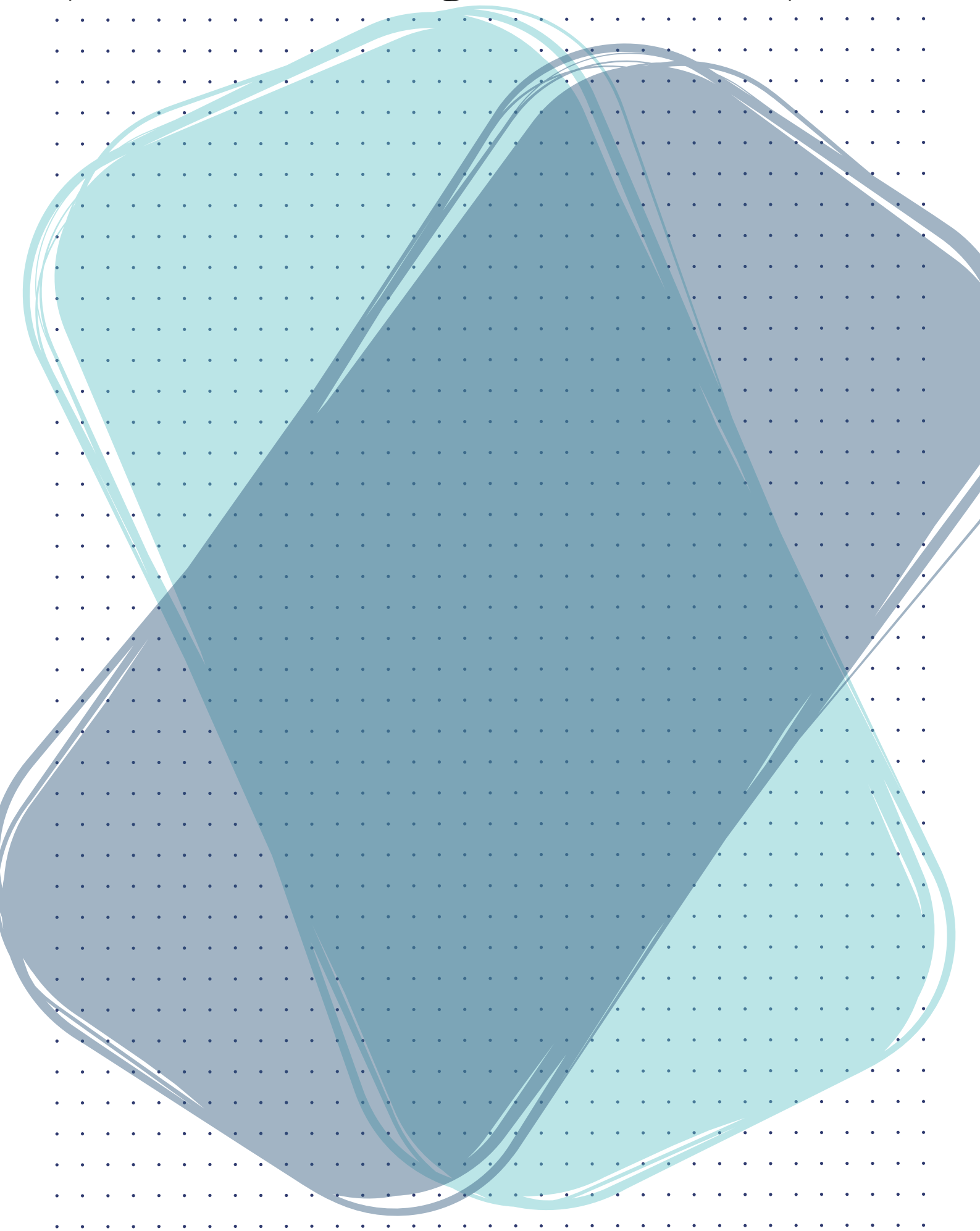
14. What is an area of your life where you are carrying some momentum into the new year?



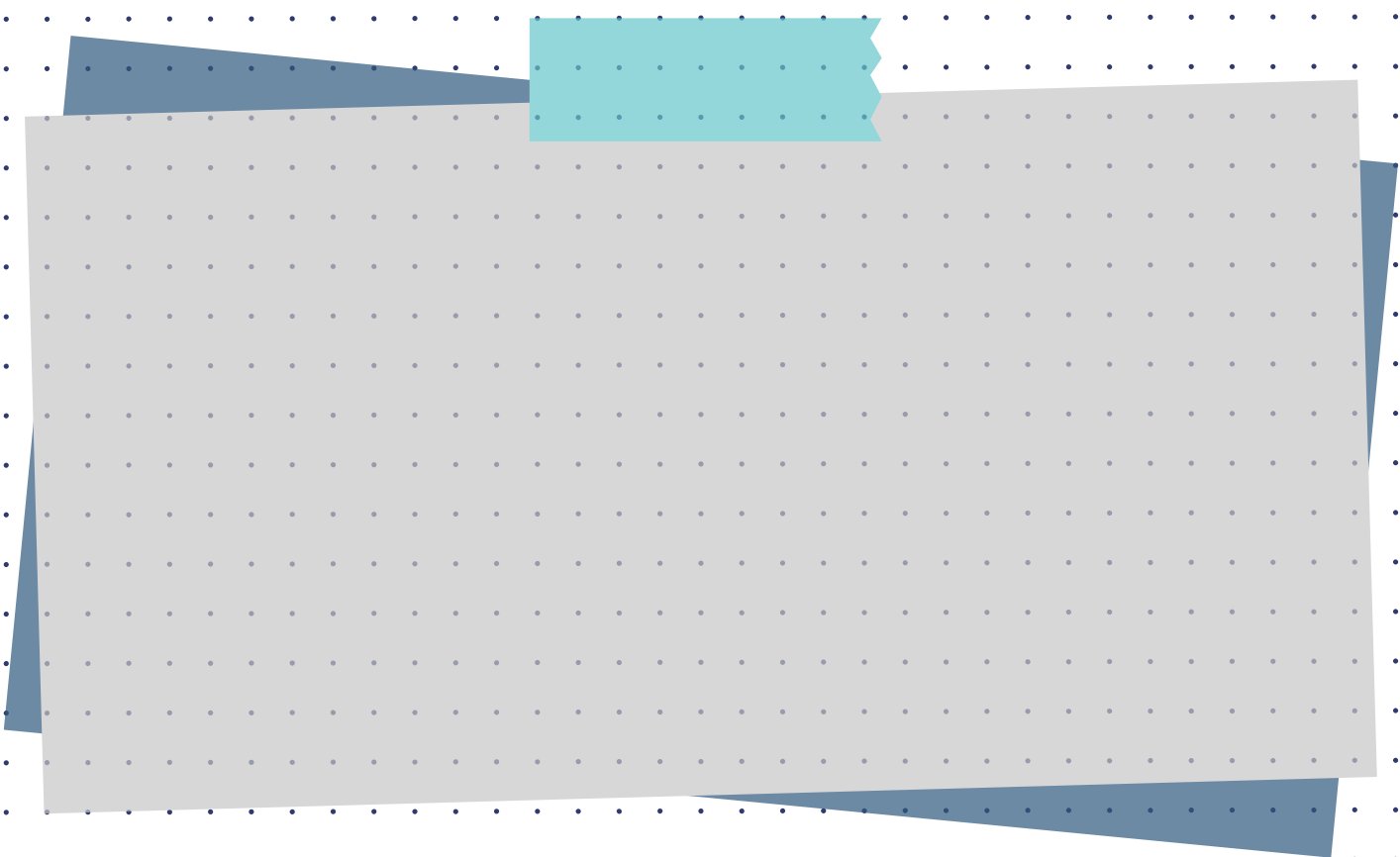
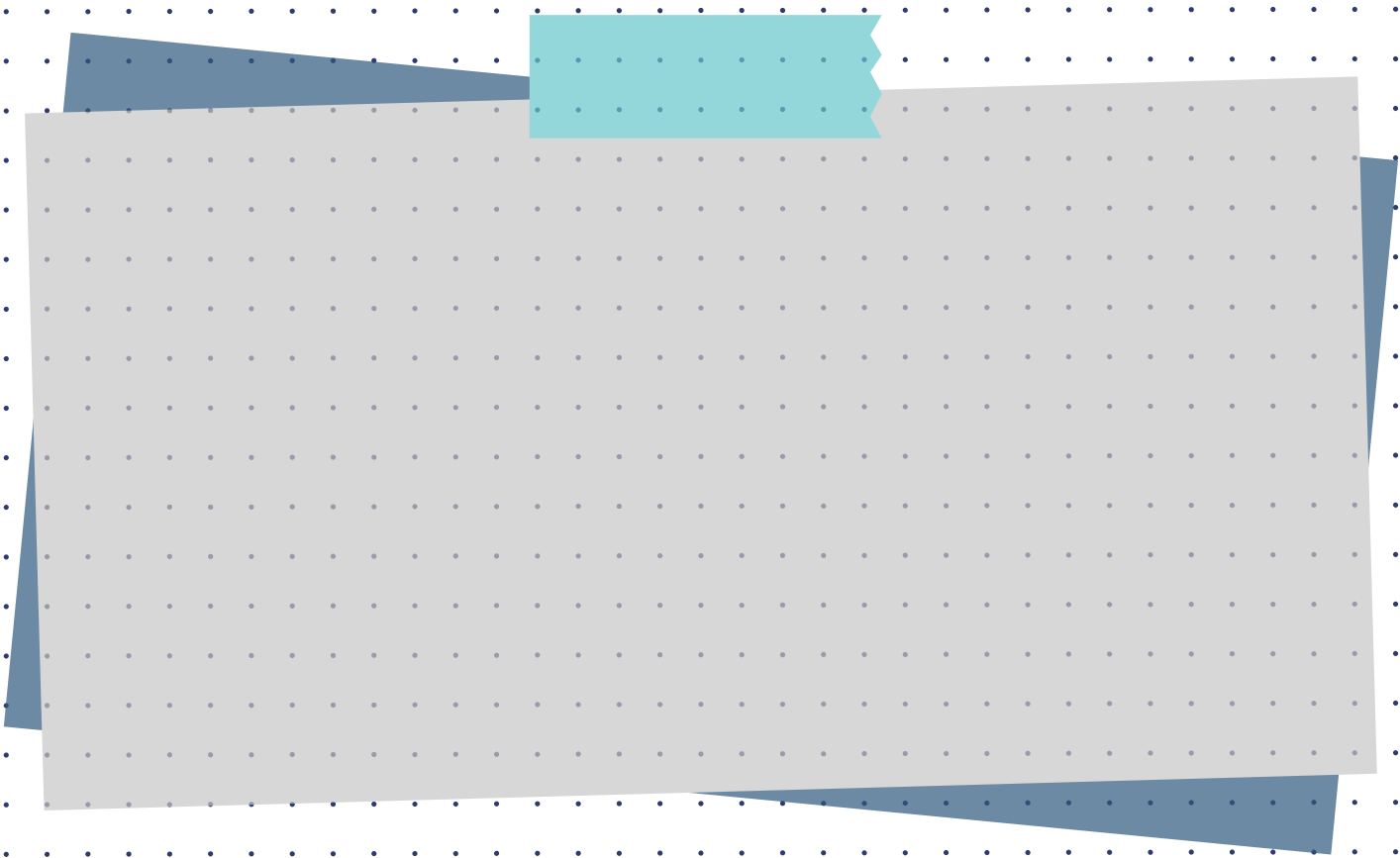
15. How did the Lord experience you this year? What do you think he would say you were like?

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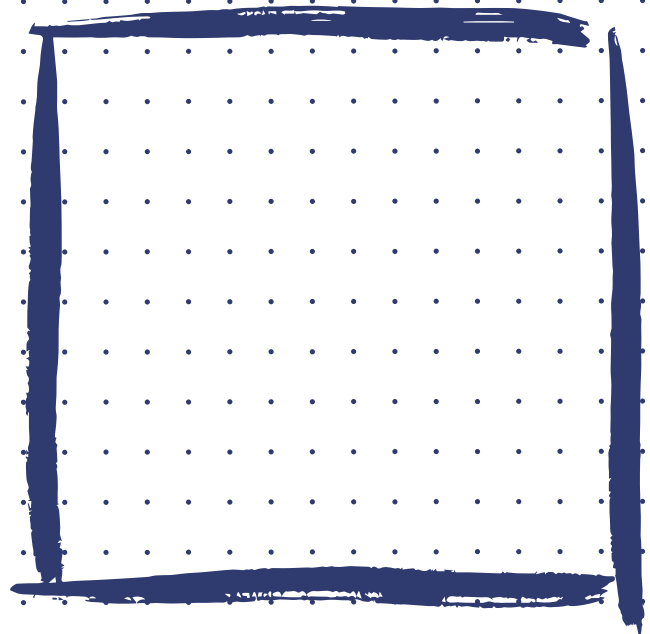
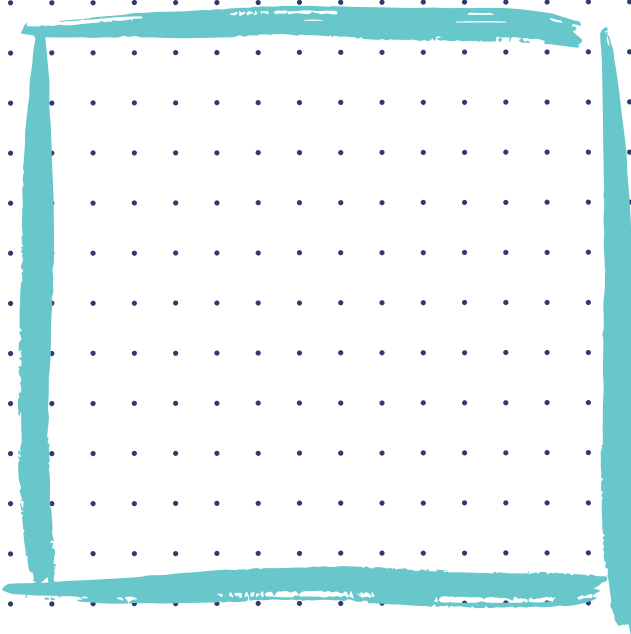
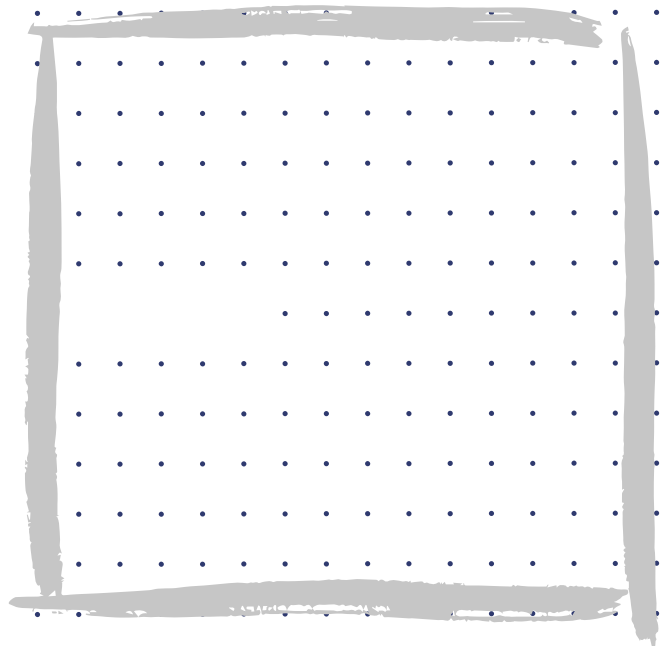
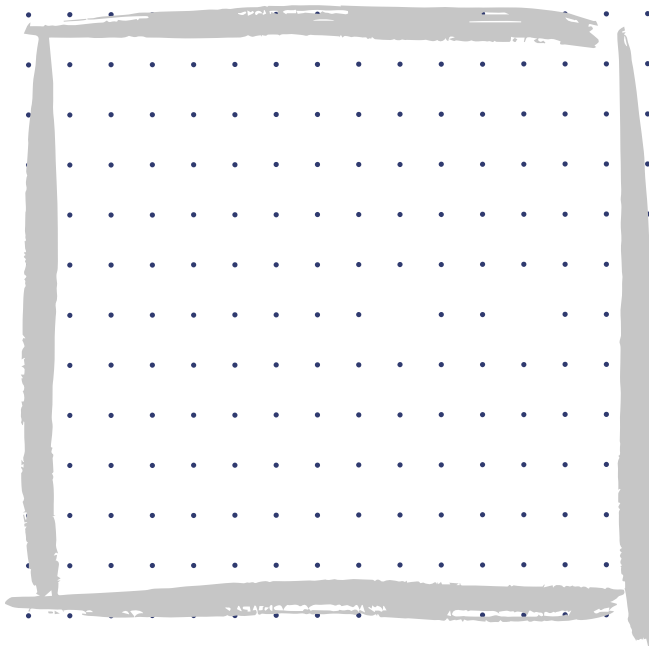
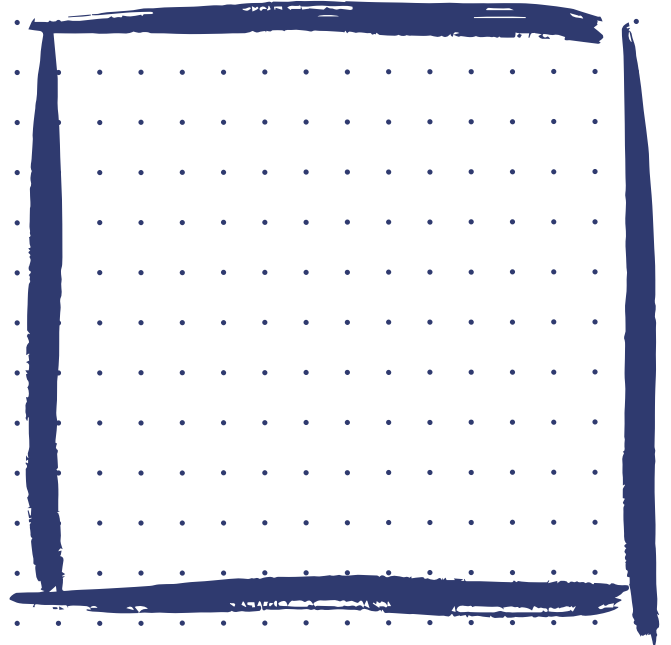
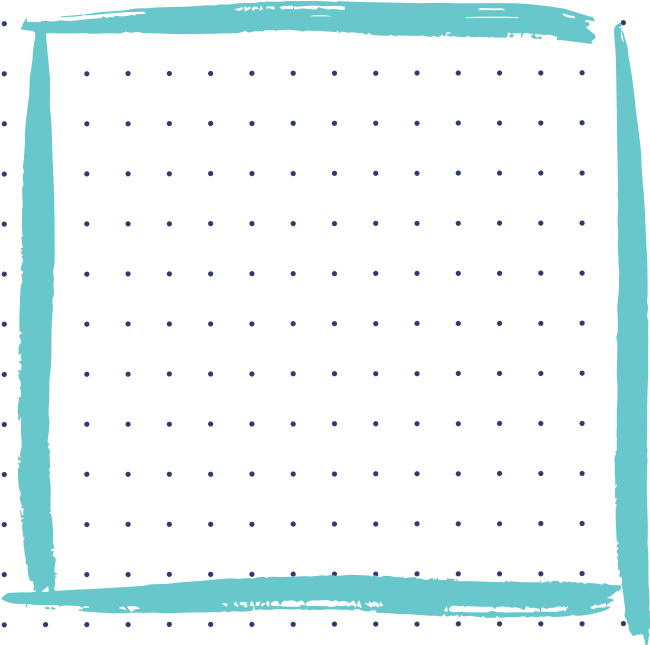
16. What moment in the scriptures did you find meaningful this past year?



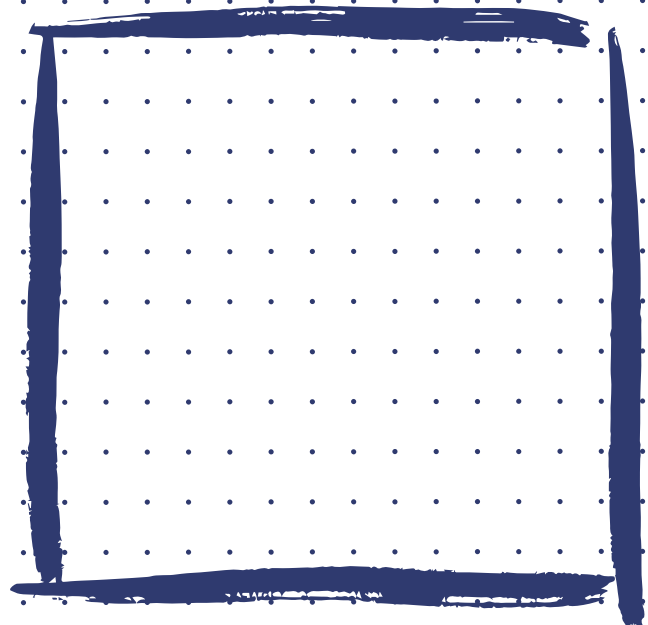
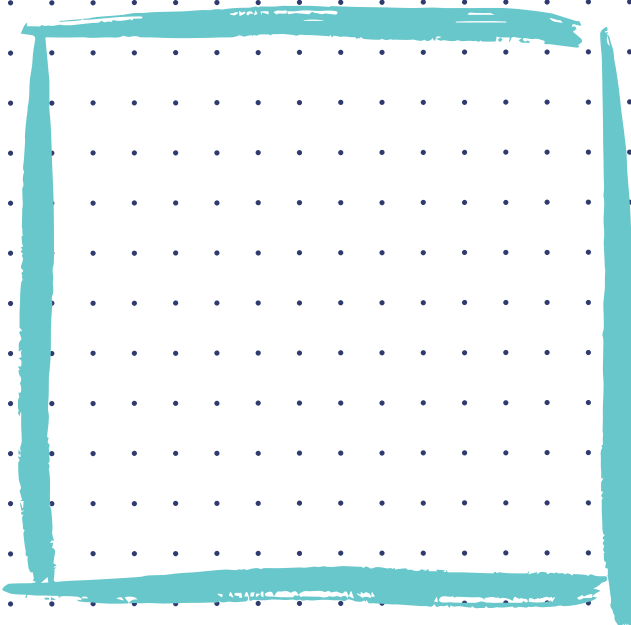
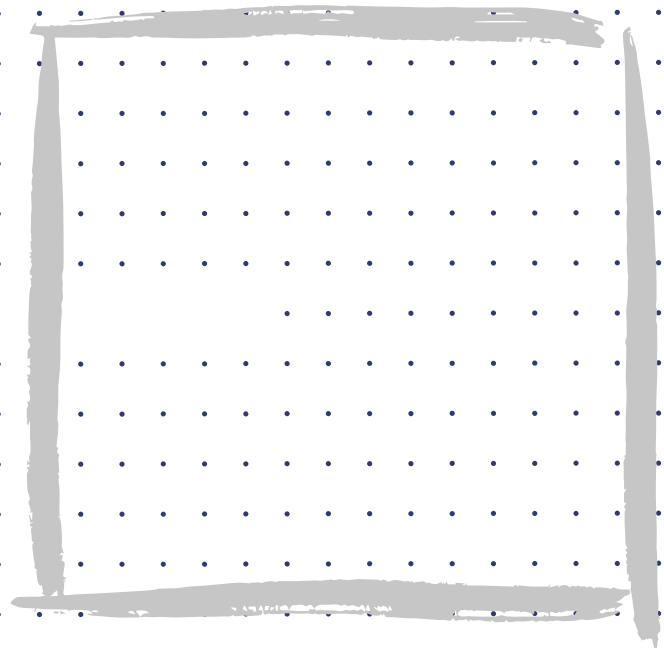
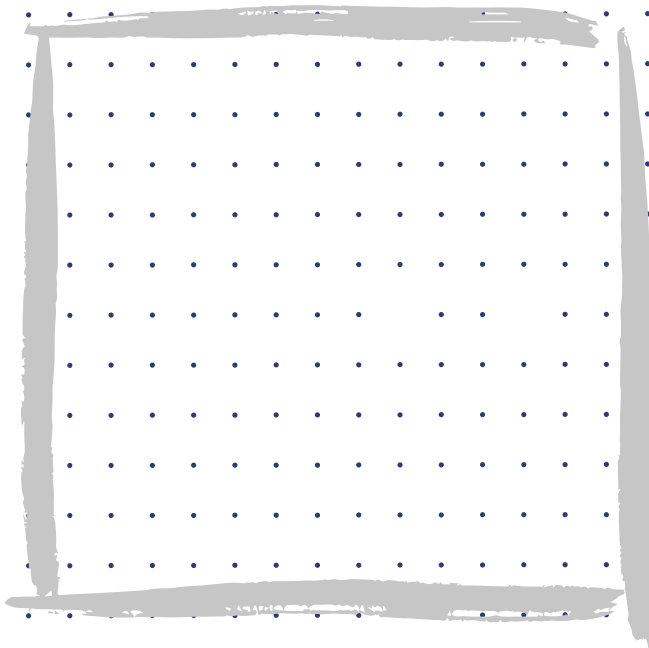
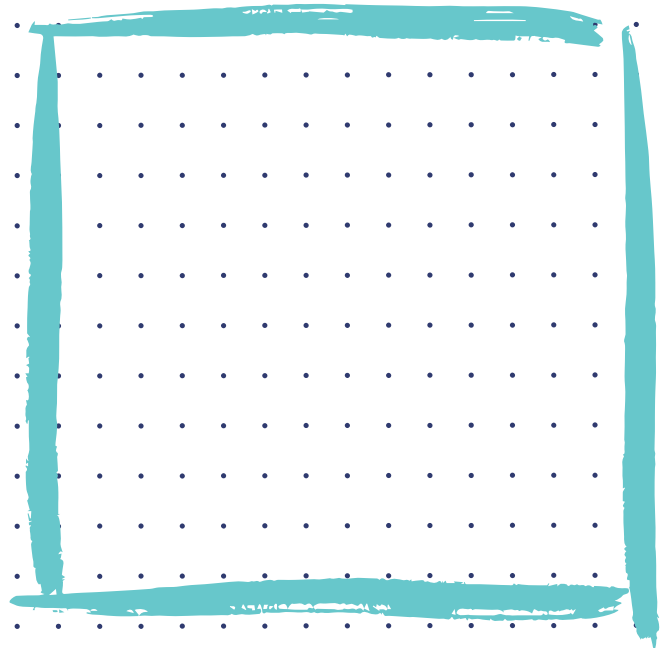
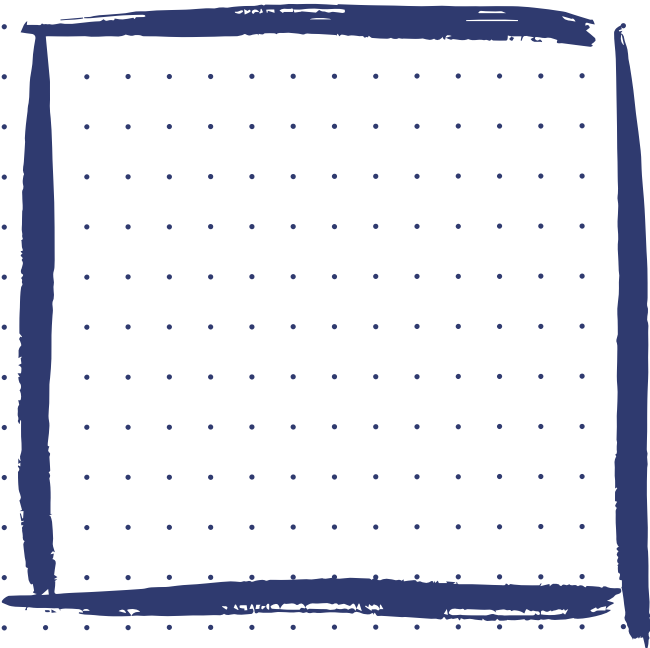
17. What do you want to keep the same or maintain as you step into the new year?



18. What do you need MORE of in 2024?



19. What do you need LESS of in 2024?



20. What are you praying about in 2024?

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"Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

**HEBREWS
13:20-21**

NOTES

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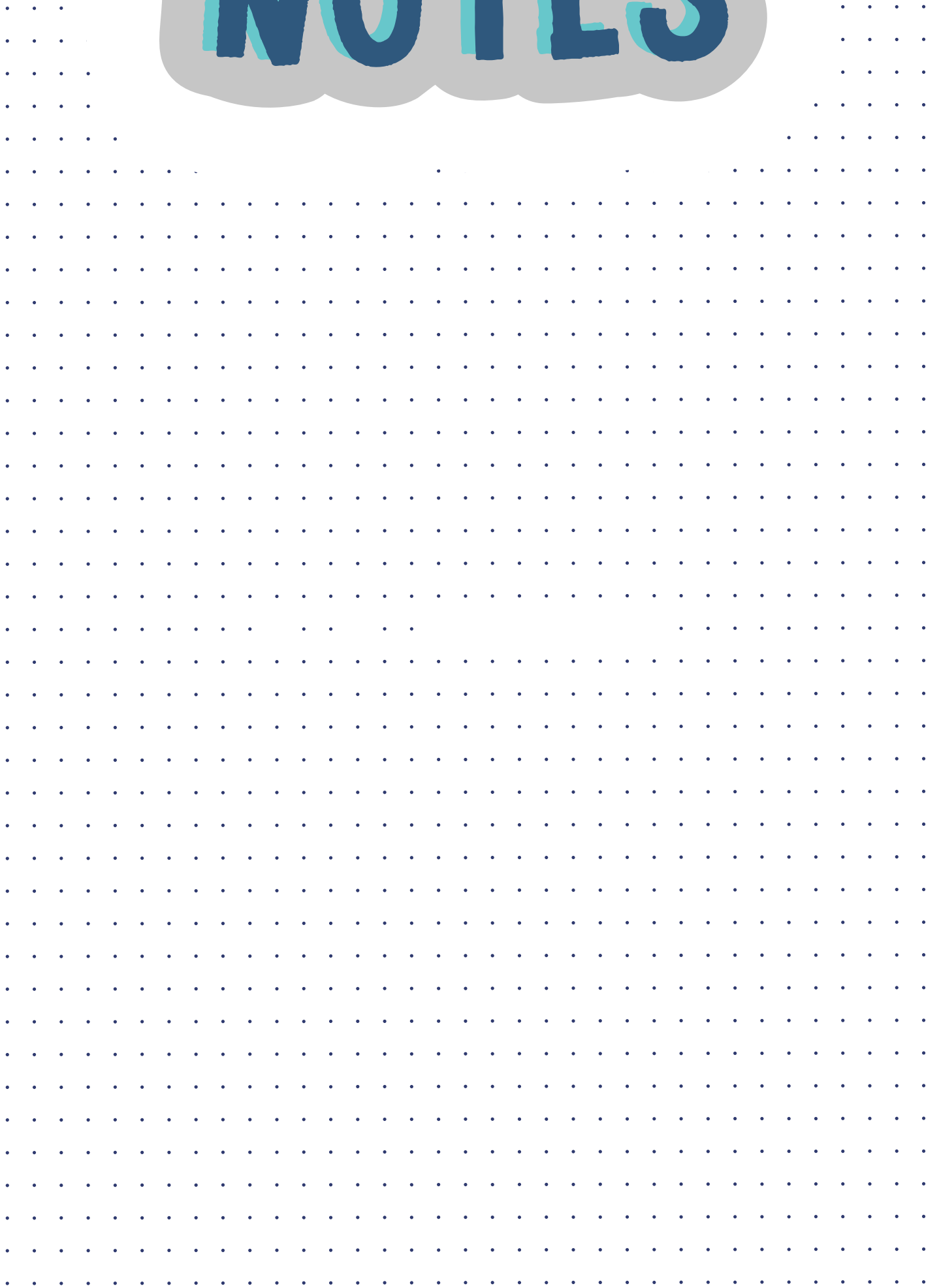
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