



2023
21-DAY DEVOTIONAL

West Side Missionary Baptist Church

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Rev. Charles H.N. Bobo, Sr., Senior Pastor

Rev. Angela Tate, Associate Pastor

January 2, 2023

Your Last Day One

It's the new year! Day one! One of the few times in where many people around the world are on one accord. The time where goals are being made to guide us on what we will add and eliminate in our lives that will make us better. We've all made resolutions that have turned out to be broken promises. We make a lot of plans, year after year, month after month, day after day and wonder why every time we find ourselves back at day one trying to get started all over again. Whether it is losing weight by way of exercising and changing eating habits, all the way to spending more time with God and less with your favorite tv shows. Regardless of what you are planning on adding or eliminating in your life this year, there is one main ingredient that you need in order to make it work.

The bible says in Matthew 6:33 to seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. The problem is that we have been going after the added things, the better life, better eating habits, the better body, the better marriage and then we decided to seek God afterwards. Seeking God first and His kingdom means making God priority and being under His rules and authority. Not leading your life by your desires but being led by the Spirit of God and allowing Him to help you make the decisions. And the benefit of being in His kingdom is that like David said, God has everything you need!

Proverbs 3:5 says to trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not to your own understanding but in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path. Whether it's a better spiritual life or physical, when we seek God first, even in these areas of our lives, He will help you and then give you direction to meet those goals. Let's make today your last day one!

Rev. Marlon Rhodeman

January 3, 2023

Mind Control

“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.” (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Day in and day out we are bombarded with phone calls, text messages, email, Instagram posts, Twitter, TV, and printed material. You name it, we have it (at least many of us do)! Oh, and let’s not forget the in-person communication, the chatter, the friend/associate who never seems to take a breath, children and others demanding attention-**Lord, help!**

Any type of communication can take control of our minds, even if just for a few moments. Not all communication is intended to do us harm. However, if we are not careful, ungodly thoughts can enter our minds. Those thoughts can lead to ungodly words that can lead to ungodly actions on our part and even influence the words and actions of others.

Here’s some good news: We can *choose* what we allow into our thinking. Yes, that’s right. God has given us the ability to accept or reject what comes at us every day. Our strongest weapons in making the right choices are **prayer** and the **WORD** of God. Saturating our minds with the word of God gives us a filter that protects against the wiles of our adversary.

Mahatma Gandhi stated: “I will not let anyone walk through my mind with dirty feet.” Metaphorically, “dirty feet” could be gossip, lies, slander, political propaganda, sarcasm, useless arguments--anything that pulls our attention away from pleasing God. I asked myself (and I encourage you to do the same): “Are you allowing “dirty feet” to walk through your mind?”

Paul gives some criteria by which to test our thoughts:

“Finally, brothers whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8) May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ rest, rule and abide with us all as we exercise our right and responsibility to control our minds. **Our spiritual health depends on it.**

Blessings,

Sister Gwendolyn Wesley

January 4, 2023

Training In Righteousness

2 Timothy 3:16-17 Amplified Bible

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed [given by divine inspiration] and is profitable for instruction, for conviction [of sin], for correction [of error and restoration to obedience], for training in righteousness [learning to live in conformity to God's will, both publicly and privately—behaving honorably with personal integrity and moral courage]; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be complete and proficient, outfitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work.

When traveling, I love to carry my big leather tote with my essentials, and all my devices! It is extra cute and fashionable! After several trips of carrying all these wonderful things, in my lovely tote, I damaged my rotator cuff.

Numbness in my fingers ensued and limited mobility in my right arm. My personal trainer, who also happens to be my son had been telling me for weeks, ways that I could alleviate this strained rotator cuff pain by doing strengthening exercises. Principally, I knew what he said was true and that I needed to try it, but I didn't follow through. After no relief and my son's nudging I took his advice and allowed him to train me. Within hours I felt relief!

Many of us experience in our Christian journey, what I experienced in my physical body. We carry what we consider essentials, but these things cause us strain. We know in principle that we need to take different steps, but in practice we don't allow ourselves the time or space to follow through. We brush it off. We often choose a life of strain and pain.

The good news is you don't have to! Growing in godliness and obedience takes persistence and practice. When we first believe, we are not instantly fully developed saints. Our lifelong training program has only begun. Training in righteousness is needed so that we daily live conformed to God's word in our public and private lives. Don't be like me and choose pain and discomfort over relief and strain free. God is nudging us to follow His instructions, acknowledge conviction, and accept correction. This training allows us to be thoroughly equipped to do His work. We are complete in Him. We are outfitted in His Word – now that's fashionable.

Rev. Jennifer Strayhorn

January 5, 2023

Take It To God First

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7

How many times have you felt a little sick and it was something you hadn't quite experienced before? If you are like me, you may have started to list out your symptoms to try to figure out what's wrong. If you are like me, you probably even went to the website, WebMD.com, to input your symptoms only to have the website give you a list of possible diagnoses. You told the website that you have a minor cough and now it's telling you that you may have lung cancer or tuberculosis when that is 99.99999% unlikely. Instead of going to a website, I really need to just call my physician and let them know the issue so they can tell me what's wrong and how to fix it. They know my health history and they know how to accurately diagnose different illnesses. Usually what happens is they prescribe some over-the-counter medicine that fixes my simple issue.

I find that I'm not only guilty of this scenario with my physical health but with my spiritual health as well. Many times, I find myself fighting a spiritual battle but instead of taking it to the Lord, I instead went to friends, different advice websites or even social media for a diagnosis and solution.

Whenever we face various trials, whether it is physical, spiritual, or emotional God should be the first one that we go to. He knows our history; He knows our future and He knows exactly what we need. While the other sources may make the issue seem major, we have to remember that God is bigger than any trouble we face and nothing is too hard for Him. One of my favorite hymns is “What a Friend We Have In Jesus.” The last line of the chorus says, “Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.”

Going to other sources may cause us unnecessary stress and worry or could possibly send us down the wrong path all together. Taking our issues to God first will always lead us down the path that leads to healing, wholeness, and peace.

Sister Tenecia Strayhorn

January 6, 2023

Bless The Lord

*“I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth,”
Psalm 34:1*

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. The siren nagged Savannah’s ears.

She sat up in bed like a toy whose spring had seen better days.

Molasses feet searched for homes inside fuzzy house shoes and lunged toward the menace that disturbed her. Frankly, when she turned off the alarm, Savannah didn’t feel like blessing the Lord.

Torrents of to-dos began to assault her mind, threatening to wash away the night’s rest.

She nudged her still-sleeping-husband Lamont with, “It’s time to get up babe,” and swung into the morning routine. She put on bacon, toast, and a pot of tea. She stirred the kids to get ready for school.

She packed lunches, ironed clothes and threw on exercise clothes like a ninja before finally pausing to listen to the day’s “Eat this Book: One Year Bible with Daily Psalm” reading as she melted miles on the basement treadmill.

She willed herself to focus on the voice ringing through her earphones, and let the Word wash away worries about family, work, this and that.

Pondering God’s Word and His blessings on her life reframed her overwhelmed thoughts. Now, instead of thinking about the list of tasks and chores that she “had to do” she thought about what she “gets to do.”

“Thank you, God, for the health and strength to serve you,” she said aloud and worshipped.

As God’s daughter, He chose her to be the vessel who He worked through to serve her family and shine for Him at work.

While the challenges were still there, at second glance, they shrunk! She now had the direction and momentum she needed.

She climbed the stairs, a bit lighter now somehow, and announced, “It’s time to get up babe!” Kids, “Let’s rise and shine, shake and bake!”

How about you friend? Will you pause to bless the Lord today, no matter what and even if you don’t feel like it? I dare you to bless Him and watch Him transform your day.

Sister Shantana Stewart

January 7, 2023

Prayerfully Fit

Romans 12:12 Living Bible

¹² Be glad for all God is planning for you. Be patient in trouble, and prayerful always.

TV, social media sites, YouTube, movies, computers, phones, and every medium bombards us regularly on how to be physically fit. Every company/organization has an “incredible” money back guarantee and a foolproof plan that guarantees you will be physically fit in a few days! Most are astute enough to know that buying any of the wonder products will never take the place of physical activity and managing what we consume. Of course, both are easier said than done. Most have a love/hate relationship with exercise. It takes time, money and is not comfortable or convenient. Because of this, less than 1% of the world’s total population, is “totally physically fit.”

Similarly, prayer catch phrases are broadcasted on every medium. It allows people to think it is a quick fix for whatever ails. We use cliché prayer expressions in lieu of spending time honestly communicating with God. Like physical exercise, when we pray, we want a foolproof plan that guarantees that what we offer up to God will happen. Prayer is not a genie’s lamp or a gimmick. Prayer is sincerely, intentionally, and regularly communicating with God. Prayer is more than asking God for what we want, a wish list of sorts. Learning to spend more time in prayer allows our minds to be less consumed with our will and empowers us to yield to God’s will. What if every believer was “totally prayerfully fit?” Have you ever wondered what would happen if every believer earnestly prayed? I can only imagine how our world would change.

Romans 12:12 states that we can be glad about **God plans** for us. His plan is for us to be **patient** in trouble because we are **prayerful** always. Are you prayerfully fit? What is your prayer fitness level? Occasionally? Regularly? Always? Wherever you are, you can move to a new level. God loves to talk to his children.

Rev. Jennifer Strayhorn

January 8, 2023

The Fifty-One Twelve

I have a sensor in my car that lets me know when my tires are low. It even tells me the psi (pounds per square inch) in each tire. As I was driving home one day the sensor came on to let me know one of my tires was low. I had a way to go before I would arrive home, so I figured it was just reading low because of the cold weather. However, when I checked the psi on the low tire, which should be 35psi, it was only 13psi. When I got out to look at the tire, it didn't look low. But when I took it to an auto body shop it was beyond repair because of a rod stuck in it that I couldn't see at first.

We can go through life looking like we are ok on the outside. As a matter of fact, we do our daily routines, interact with others and we look like we are ok when in reality we are deflated, we've lost joy, we've lost hope and we are in need of repair. And before it's too late, stop by *THE REPAIR SHOP* and ask for the 51-12... Psalm 51:12 that is, which says, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me."

God can and will restore, replenish, and reignite you if you ask.

Rev. Charles H.N. Bobo, Sr.

January 9, 2023

Just Breathe

Genesis 2:7 (NLT) - "Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person."

God breathed the breath of life into your nostrils, so you could become a living person. How often do you consider the all day, every day miracle that is breathing?

Each day you inhale and exhale approximately 20,000 times. While you brush your teeth, while you drive, while you watch tv - all day long, you breathe. Breathing is part of the autonomic nervous system, which controls involuntary functions. That means God designed your body to breathe without any conscious thought from you.

Let's settle in that for a moment and pay attention to our glorious design.

Take in a long deep breath. Notice the air moving as you inhale. Feel your lungs filling and your stomach expanding.

Now breathe out slowly. Notice the air moving as you exhale. Feel the emptying of your lungs and the contraction of your stomach.

Let's do this again a few more times. Inhale, Exhale, Inhale, and Exhale.

How are you feeling? Relaxed? Energized? Calm? Powerful? Confident? Happy? Peaceful?

All the above feelings are part of the abundant life that Jesus offers to you, and breathing is an integral part of that abundant life.

Sometimes, however, your breathing gets out of whack, and you move away from that abundant life. Sometimes when you are feeling anxious or nervous or scared, your breathing may speed up. Or sometimes you even hold your breath when you are experiencing those things.

In those moments, pause to notice your breathing. Remind yourself that God has your breathing under control. Reflect on the abundant life Jesus offers to you with each breath. And apply a scripture on each inhale and exhale.

Inhale: Greater is He that is in me

Exhale: Than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4)

Inhale: I am more than a conqueror

Exhale: Through him who loves me (Romans 8:37)

Inhale: I can do all things

Exhale: Through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13)

Rev. Roshaunda D. Cade

January 10, 2023

Don't Forget to Take Your Medicine

If you have ever taken prescription medicine given by your doctor, then you've heard or read to take all of the medicine as prescribed. It is tempting to stop taking your medication especially if you start to feel better before it is all gone. Failing to take medicines as prescribed can result in worsened health, unwanted side effects, substance use disorders, death, and other serious health conditions. While most prescriptions give you so many days, or a specific amount of pills to take, the Bible gives an unlimited prescription in Proverbs 17:22, "A merry heart does good, *like* medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones." There is no expiration date on the cheerful heart, no specific amount you should take before stopping. But a regular dosage of a cheerful heart is the medicine needed for your physical health. Today:

Guard your Heart. Believe it or not, you are responsible for what's in your heart. And to have a merry heart, you must guard your heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life."

Be Grateful. Grateful people have merry hearts. 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

Focus on the Good. Instead of focusing on the bad, the negativity, the complaining, the drama, etc. focus on what's good. Philippians 4:8 says, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things"

Do these things today to ensure that your heart will be merry. Remember to take all of your medicine!

Rev. Charles H.N. Bobo, Sr.

January 11, 2023

Taking Care Of God's Temple

19 Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, 20 for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, New Living Translation

We often talk about being a good steward of our finances and giving God at least 10% of the income He has blessed us with. Did you know that you are also stewards of your body? Your body does not belong to you. It is the Lord's, and He is letting you use it. Your body is His temple, and it is critical that we take care of it. Maintaining the health of your body is a heavenly assignment that you need to focus on in order to be a good steward.

God cares about your entire body and well-being, so you need to take care of all aspects of your health – physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental. Each one is very important, and you have to be a good steward of all. While that may seem overwhelming, there are some simple things you can improve your health in all these areas.

- 1) Get sufficient relaxation and rest.
- 2) Nourish your body with nutrient rich food.
- 3) Exercise consistently.
- 4) Manage stress

Taking care of God's temple is an act of worship. Getting rest, relaxing, eating well, exercising regularly, and doing things (or not doing things) to lessen your stress bring glory to God. Self-care honors God, you should never feel bad or guilty when you devote the time to take care of yourself. You are just being obedient to God.

Have you been a good steward of the holy temple He has allowed you to use? If not, you can start today!

Deacon Christopher Cade

January 12, 2023

Benefits

*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.
(John 10:10 b)*

In 1975, I received a Bad Conduct Discharge from the U. S. Marines because of crimes that I had committed. As a result, I was not eligible to receive any government benefits. In 1991, I gave my life to Jesus Christ, walked away from my criminal lifestyle, and moved to St. Louis. Although I was trying to do what was right, my discharge was hurting me. I couldn't apply for certain jobs. I couldn't afford to go back to school. I didn't have health insurance and didn't meet the qualifications to buy a house. All because I didn't have any benefits.

After I wrote my first book, *The Hoodlum Preacher*, some Hollywood producers talked to me about making it into a movie. To avoid future embarrassment, they wanted me to verify the things that I had written. So I got copies of my criminal records from Illinois and Missouri. I even got a copy of one of my mug shots. But when I received my military records, I got the shock of my life. Although it listed my court-martials and convictions, it listed my discharge as, "Honorable Conditions."

I found out that the Appellate Court had overturned my convictions and upgraded my discharge in 1979. I never received the letter that they sent informing me of the outcome. Therefore, for more than thirty years, I thought I had a Bad Conduct Discharge. More importantly, for over thirty years, I had benefits that I was unaware of.

When we accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, He became our lawyer in the court of appeals. Because of what He accomplished on Calvary, the sins that we committed and were convicted of were forgiven and overturned. But some of us are still beating ourselves up because of things that we did in the past. We are not aware of the benefits that we have been given. Love, Joy, peace, and many others. Serving God has its benefits.

Rev. Burton Barr, Jr.

January 13, 2023

Cleansing His Temple

Matthew 21:12-17

Have you ever been so fed up with a situation, a condition, a circumstance, or even a relationship that you were determined that something had to be done differently this time? The term “fed up” implies that whatever the situation, it has happened time and time again. The situation can be emotionally draining, physically draining, psychologically draining, mentally draining or a combination of any/all of these.

I am reminded of Jesus’ frustration and anger upon entering the temple. Some refer to this event as cleansing the temple. Jesus’ actions were radical and life changing for those who witnessed them. I can picture our “fed up” Savior say that His “House of Prayer” had become a “den of robbers” (Matthew 21:13 NIV). His temple that was to be used for prayer, healing, nurturing, and teaching had been corrupted. Well, one might ask, what were the radical and life changing actions?

1. He threw out all those who were selling and buying things there.
2. He turned over the tables that belonged to those who were exchanging different kinds of money.
3. And he turned over the benches of those who were selling doves

Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 6:19 that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in us. So, when was the last time that you did a radical, life changing cleansing of the Holy Spirit’s temple?

Mental Check: “Iron sharpens iron.” Who are those that are surrounding you?

Emotional Check: Is my heart in the right place?

Physical Check: Am I following the medical advisement of my physician?

Psychological Check: Should I seek professional counseling?

Spiritual Check: Would this be pleasing to God?

Your overall well-being is important, not only for you to survive. You are a blessing to those that are in your life. And your body is the dwelling of the Holy Spirit. What area are you willing to cleanse to make more room for him?

1 Corinthians 6:19: Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own” NIV

Prayer: Lord God, we thank you that you dwell with in us. Reveal to us the “checks” that we need to make so that your temple (our bodies) is well to do your works. Amen

Sister Shay Davenport

January 14, 2023

Know The Difference!

“So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while.” 1 Peter 1:6 NLT

After three years of running, I still feel like a novice at times. There’s always something new to learn. New running techniques. New ways to cross train. New routes. New goals. And with each, new challenges. After training all of summer 2021, I completed my first official half marathon in October 2021! I didn’t accomplish everything I set out to do, but I finished and that’s always a reason to celebrate. After such a successful training season, I was honestly looking forward to running and improving for my next race in February 2022. Unfortunately, my busy schedule got the best of me and the race did not go as planned. But again, I finished. Plus, I had another race in April so another opportunity to get better. My first spring run went miserably. I felt like I reached my limit and there was no getting better. Then I remembered how God encouraged me previously. I was running through Forest Park feeling absolutely defeated when I heard Him say, “Your limit and your current challenge. Know the difference!” I was not as fast and felt completely out of it. But was I really at my limit? 1 Peter 1:6 tells us that we “must endure many trials for a **little while**,” not forever. When things feel challenging, it’s easy to reason we are incapable, or the task is impossible. It’s not. But I will agree, it is hard. As Christians, we are not strangers to tough circumstances. James 1:2 tells us to “Count it all to joy” when challenges come because it tests and grows our faith. Romans 5:3 tells us to “rejoice in our sufferings” because it will produce endurance, character, and hope. Guess what happens when you keep showing up for a walk/run or workout even when it challenges you? You build strength, literally, to go further or lift more! “So be truly glad. There is wonderful [celebration] ahead!”

In case you’re wondering how my April run went, it was the worst! Hills are no joke. But my race in October 2022... the best one yet.

Sister Tiara Hopson

January 15 2023

Where Is Your Brother?

*Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"
"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4: 9)*

In the fourth chapter of the book of Genesis, the story of Cain and Abel is told. Cain allowed the powers of sin to overtake him, and in a fit of rage; he killed his brother, Abel. Afterwards, God asked Cain an intriguing question. "Where is your brother?"

I want to ask you that same question. Where is your brother? I'm not talking about your biological brother. I'm talking about the men and women that you come into contact within the brotherhood of mankind.

We all know someone who is hurting. They may have lost their home or their job. They may have gone through a divorce or are estranged from their children. Someone close to them may have died or is in prison. They might be battling with some type of addiction or mental issue. They need a helping hand or an encouraging word. God is asking you, "Where is your brother? Where is your sister? Can you see him or her? Can you see his hurt or feel her pain?"

When Cain was faced with that question, he gave the answer that all of us have thought about at one time or another. "Am I my brother's keeper?" It amazes me how quickly we can give up on someone because of his or her predicament. But we are thankful that there was someone that did not give up on us when we were in our mess.

You have been hurt. You have been disappointed. People that you love have lied to you, stolen from you, and fooled you time and time again. You have cried many tears because of the pain that they have caused. But God is still asking you that same question. "Where is your brother?"

The next time you pray; say, "Lord, here is my brother. Here is my sister. I am putting him/her in your hands." Then trust God to do the rest.

Rev. Burton Barr, Jr.

January 16, 2023

Order My Steps

Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails. Prov. 19:21 (NIV)

TIME...

I'm just sitting here in this new year thinking about how grateful I am to be alive. Every day you see the news announcer say that somebody has passed away or had an accident or is sick. I remember in December 2020 laying in a hospital bed in Chicago with a severe eye infection that caused my body's system to spike and while they were working to keep me alive, telling me that I almost died, all I could think about was that I had plans. I needed to get home to Saint Louis, I had stuff to do. I remember telling the doctors just fix me up enough so my wife can take me home.

While I made it, there are many that don't. God reminds me that "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails". So, no resolutions this year. Every day I wake up, I just want to be GRATEFUL and operate in JOY. I want to think of HIM before I speak, move or act. In all my ways, I want to be mindful to acknowledge HIM. He WILL direct my path.

Lord, thank you for the gift of life that you give me each day. Thank you for the family blessings of children and grandchildren who bring joy into my life daily. Thank you for a loving wife and we thank you for directing our path together daily. Lord help us to be grateful and operate in your joy daily.

Deacon Euclid Strayhorn, Sr.

January 17, 2023

Sowing And Reaping

Psalm 126:5 Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy

Psalm 126 is a what is called a song of ascents and talks about the children of Israel being brought band from captivity to their homeland. They had spent years in captivity and no doubt had a tough time while they were there. And though they had encouragement from the Lord along the way to continue to live their lives (Jer. 29:4-7), I'm sure it was still a struggle. Think about it: being someplace you would rather not be, having to do things you would rather not do, and having to be around people you would rather not be around! Yes, we are talking about the children of Israel but we often times find ourselves in these same places. Even worse, sometimes our captivity is a result of our own disobedience or our own poor choices. This type of "captivity" is probably not the best for our spiritual health! It may cause us to wonder where is God? It can cause us to doubt our faith all together. Who among us has not spent some time hurting and doubting and crying even about our bleak and dark situations? Well, Psalm 126 gives us a glimpse of what's on the other side of those tears. The scripture says those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. This challenged my typical understanding of "you reap what you sow". We often use that verse from Galatians 6 to warn people that the nature of the seeds they plant today will impact the harvest that is coming tomorrow. While this is true, the word in Psalms lets us know that even our tears are part of the seed that we plant. All those tears that you cry in a space of despair, depression, and hopelessness will, with the Lord's help, eventually result in joy. As much as you have gone forth weeping, you will come again with rejoicing. Your tears are not in vain! Know that the Lord sees your tears, and He knows your need. Your harvest of joy is coming!

Rev. Angela M. Tate

January 18, 2023

Waiting On The Lord

Proverbs 3:5-8

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

Years ago, I wanted to change positions at my job. I had been working with a very heavy jackhammer (90 lbs.) for years and it was taking a toll on my body. My foreman really didn't want me to change positions, but I applied for a driving position.

I waited for this position but was passed over. I saw new employees in the driving position I applied for while I had to drag that jackhammer around.

I prayed and I prayed. I waited and I waited. It's been a year Lord, how much longer? I asked my Sunday School class to pray for me for this position. Someone told me to "claim it", it will happen. Well, I wondered when. I waited.

I went to the altar one Sunday, but I still had to wait. I did not understand. I was going to church, serving whenever and wherever I could. I wanted to know what was going on. Why me?

Finally, I got the driving position. I didn't know that waiting on the Lord would be better than I ever could imagine. I received better work hours, less work and peace of mind. I was also made Lead Driver. I was and still am happy at work. I learned to trust in the Lord in my waiting.

Just a quick side note. My truck did not have a radio, so I was going to ask for one. But the Holy Spirit led me not to get a radio so I could spend my time with Him while I drive.

In my experience, if you want something, go to the Lord first and wait on Him so He can work it out for your good.

Brother Orlando Bryant

January 19, 2023

Suffering In Silence

Mark 5:25-35

As an African-American woman, I am so fascinated by the Biblical story of the woman with an issue of blood. Now, this Biblical story does not specify that the medical problem is a female related issue, but after I suffered in silence with uterine fibroids, this story still remains relevant today.

Fibroids are noncancerous masses of muscular tissue and collagen that can develop within the wall of the uterus. They are the most common benign tumor in premenopausal women. Whew...that was a mouthful!! Medical research indicates that the uterine fibroids are disabling for black women. Black women dealing with this condition often suffer severe and debilitating symptoms.

You see, this is why many black women can relate to the unnamed woman with the issue of blood. I love this story because she actively sought help by visiting physicians and keeping the faith! Mark 5: 26a (NIV) states, “She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors.” I can imagine her praying for relief, I can imagine her praying for the heavy bleeding to stop, I can imagine her going to doctor after doctor, after doctor. I can also imagine her not giving up hope and her faith growing stronger with each disappointment. I am encouraged because she made time to take care of her biological issue and continued to have faith that a resolution would come even after twelve years. While her healing did not come through the assistance or under the medical advisement of doctors, it did come through her faith and perseverance.

No more suffering in silence, seek help, keep the faith, and persevere. Her faith was the healing power that caused our Savior to stop and take notice.

Mark 5:34: Daughter, your faith has healed you. “Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” NIV

Prayer: Lord God, we thank you for our doctors, physicians, specialists and surgeons. We thank you for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd medical opinions. And we thank you for our faith in your healing word. Amen

Sister Shay Davenport

January 20, 2023

Down with Depression

Psalm 42:11

Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.

Psalm 42 is one of my favorite psalms and it is one that I use quite often in the Christian counseling space. David teaches us that 2 seemingly opposing facts can be true at the same time. Typically, when we think of someone who is depressed, who is downtrodden or in despair we don't automatically say they are a person who is after God's own heart. But that is the truth about David in this psalm. He says that his tears have been his food day and night (Psalm 42:3), yet his soul thirsts for the living God. He says that those around him are taunting him, asking him, "where is your God" and all the while he never stops recounting all that God has done for him and remembering how he went with joy to the house of God. Even in the midst of the fact that God is good, David is still wrestling with the questions "why are you cast down, O my soul?". David helps us to see that faith in God and depression are not mutually exclusive. I can have faith, even much more than a mustard seed worth of it and still feel down and out. David though doesn't just ask the question. He also gives the answer. He acknowledges his depression, tries to figure out why exactly he feels that way with as good as God has been to him, he looks back over his life and can't help but remember what joy in his life looked like and then he says, "hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him." So when you're feeling down, you don't have to pretend that you don't simply because you are a woman or a man of faith. You can acknowledge that you feel down, hurt, lonely, empty, even depressed and still praise God for how good He's been and for how good He will continue to be. Hope in God for hope in Him never fails.

Rev. Angela M. Tate

January 21, 2023

You Are Not Your Own

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body ^[a] and in your spirit, which are God's.

One of the most important things we as Christians must realize is that we do not own our body. Psalm 139:13-16 tells us we are fearfully and wonderfully made by God. He knew every hair on our head before we were even born. But because we were born into sin, there had to be a sacrifice, an atonement for our sins. Jesus Christ our Lord made that sacrifice and paid for our sins with His own life. He bought us with His blood and now, therefore, we are His. Our body belongs to Him.

Wrong thinking and bad choices can ruin our physical health. We must make healthy eating choices and not let our work, school or other things on our schedule get in the way of our physical exercise. The Bible says “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. (1st Corinthians 10:31). Skipping meals or overeating does not show our love for Christ. Correct thinking and right choices come from understanding that we do not own our body, God does. Our body is God’s temple, and we are responsible to be good stewards of it. Caring for our body is a way to demonstrate our love for Him. If we believe that God sent His only son to die for our sins, it only makes sense for us to take care of the body He gave us.

Taking care of our body means taking care of our physical health. Eating well, regular exercise and getting enough sleep are key ways of taking care of our physical health. The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6 that our body is a temple, and we should honor God with our body.

Rev. Helen R. Bryant

January 22, 2023

Stepping Into Trust

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

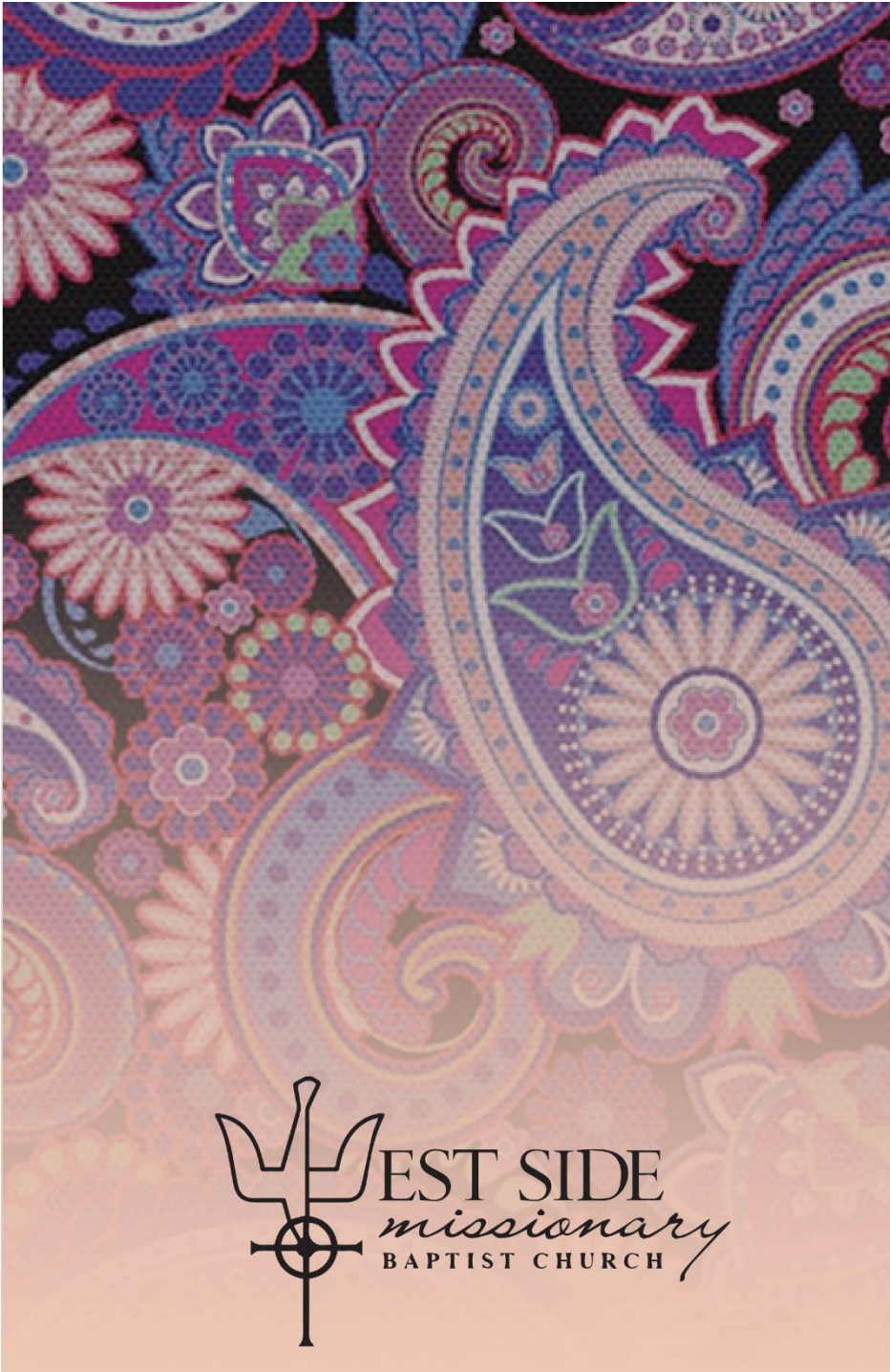
At the age of 28, I was a married man with a wife, children, and a house in the suburbs. I had set my goals at a young age telling my mother at the age of 18 that my goals were to move out of her house at the age of 21, get my own apartment, find myself a good woman, be married by the age of 22, have children and a house by the age of 25.

We had joined a local church where I was active. I knew God a little and He had already blessed our family, yet I was learning to trust Him one step at a time. I had always heard people talk about how God talked to them and I was skeptical. How can God talk to you? I didn't believe it and I was practically challenging God to talk to me and prove me wrong.

One morning, I was short on cash and gas, so I went to grab the kids' tootsie roll penny can which we kept on top of the refrigerator. I figured that I would just use pennies at the gas station since pennies are money too. When I grabbed the can, I heard a voice speak to me plain as day "Leave the can, I will supply your needs". I jumped first then looked around the kitchen but there was nobody there. I reached for the can again and the voice repeated "Leave the can, I will supply your needs". Now this time I knew it was God's voice, so I set the can back down, said ok Lord, got into my car and drove from highway 170 to highway 40 to the hotel where I worked in Chesterfield with NO GAS in my car. When I got to work, as I was heading up the steps to my office, I saw my insurance agent who told me he was there for a meeting and that he left an envelope on my desk. My mind was racing as I walked towards my office. How did he even know where my office was? On my desk was an envelope with a check for an undisclosed amount made out to me! I sat down and immediately called my wife shaking, trying to remain composed in my office while telling her what God had done. God had indeed supplied my needs, and this was one of many faith building steps.

"Lord help me to open my mind and my heart to you daily, to always lean on you in the midst of the trials and tribulations of this world, I can't live, breathe, move, speak, see without you, I need you lord guiding my footsteps, I love you lord and I thank you for loving me".

Deacon Euclid Strayhorn, Sr.



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