

ECGMBA BAPTIST INSPIRER

THE MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

Reverend James Isaac, III, Pastor, New Hope Granville Missionary Baptist Church

"Proclaiming the Changeless Christ to a Changing World" (Hebrews 1:1-2; 13:7-8)



An Investment In Hope

Jeremiah 32:1-15

In September 588 B.C., Jeremiah cries, "See, the siege ramps are built up to take the city" (Jeremiah 32:24). The city was surrounded by soldiers. It would soon fall. The siege had gone on for a couple of years by this time, and the people were starving in the streets of Jerusalem. There was not enough water! There was not enough food! Disease and death were reigning in the streets. There was a general mood of discouragement. About eleven months after this, Jerusalem finally fell and became the habitation of wolves and jackals.

At this time, the prophet did an unthinkable thing. When all the citizens were discouraged and doom was imminent, Jeremiah took his last seventeen shekels and bought a piece of ground. He was a prisoner and couldn't even go look at the ground. He called his local real estate agent and said, "I want to buy this piece of ground." He bought this one lot, as if to say, "The promises of God always hold."

God had promised to Moses that they would always own this land. Then, suddenly, it seemed like they would no longer own it and that the promises of God would be forgotten. At such a hopeless moment, the prophet buys a piece of ground to underscore an important inescapable truth: God never forgets.

Jeremiah takes a gigantic step in favor of the great God who cannot forget His covenants with His people.

Hope When Life Is Under Siege

What do we do when life is under siege? In this tale of God's remembrance, the Bible says, "The army of the king of Babylon was then besieging Jerusalem" (Jeremiah 32:2), and ... "The siege ramps are against the wall" (Jeremiah 32:24). What are these surrounded, hopeless souls to do when their very lives are under siege? The story points to imperative glory; the immutable hope implicit in the promises of God! The number one thing that every one of us wants from God is a sense of His unfailing promises. We want to hold His word, believing that what God says will be. His covenants are unalterable. They cannot be changed.

What is it about God that is so precious? Is it not his unchanging nature and undying covenants? His word is so immutable that all of our little neuroses which we sometimes substitute for real problems must be laid against the day when we really have a problem and therefore really need a steadfast, unwavering God. When our particular lives are under siege, in that moment we look again to Jesus Christ dying on Calvary. With His blood, He purchased our hope. If you would become a friend of God, make yourself a minister of hope.

Hope When You Spend All to Buy a Future

In Jeremiah 32:9, Jeremiah takes his seventeen shekels to buy a symbol of hope. I don't know if that's all the money he had. I suspect that it was. I think if he'd had more money, the price would have been rounded off to fifteen shekels or thirty shekels or whatever it might have been. This odd, uneven number seems to suggest that he spent all he had. How precious is hope? I believe hope is so precious that when life is reduced to the last little bit of finality there is, we'll spend everything we have for it. In Jeremiah 32 it is clear the city can't last long. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says; (*An Investment in Hope*, Continued on page 2)

An Investment in Hope, Isaac, Continued Page 1

“Take these documents, both the sealed and unsealed copies of the deed of purchase, and put them in a clay jar so they will last a long time .” (Jeremiah 32:14).

In the middle of a siege, a piece of paper –a real estate deed — is sealed in a clay jar. The war rages around this little clay jar that contains the only symbol of hope there is.

In 1948, ancient documents known as the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. According to some accounts, some little boys were throwing rocks into openings at the base of some cliffs in the Dead Sea area of Palestine. When they threw in one rock, they heard an immediate cracking and breaking sound. It was a clay pot! Scientists came back with them, climbed up and, looking into the opening, they discovered the first of the Qumram caves. Around the broken clay jar were many jars which were sealed and unbroken.

What was so special about those clay jars? They had been sealed two thousand years ago! Like Jeremiah's jar, there was something unchallengeable about the promises of God sealed in those caves. God said to the prophet, “Put the deed in a clay jar. I want people to know that when I make promises, I keep my word! Buy that piece of ground, Jeremiah, for it will be a testimony for years!”

By contrast, how unpredictable are human promises. The word of man is so unsure.

By contrast, have you ever thought about God's word? Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” Isaiah 40:31 declares, “They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. They will mount up with wings as eagles.” That promise has been around for roughly thirty-seven hundred years now.

Romans 8:18 is a wonderful verse that says that in all of our sufferings, God is always there and therefore there is always a reason to hope. Whatever happens in this life, there is hope. When all our dreams are under siege, remember the deed sealed in a clay jar. And as we trust in His enduring promises, wake each morning with this confidence that makes all life possible: “It is always right to hope!”

The Solid Rock

My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

When darkness veils His lovely face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In ev'ry high and stormy gale,
my anchor holds within the vale.
When all around my soul gives way,
he then is all my hope and stay.

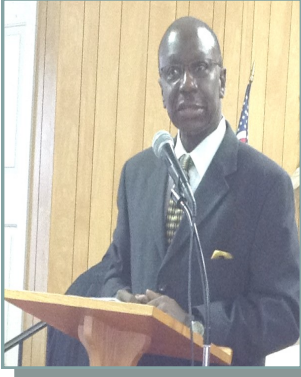
When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found,
dressed in His righteousness alone,
faultless to stand before the throne.

Refrain:

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand
all other ground is sinking sand,
all other ground is sinking sand.

A Pastoral Thought ***“You Need a Bigger Basket”***

Written by Reverend J. Eric Morgan, III, Former ECGMBA Moderator, Pastor, Mount Vernon Baptist Church



A story was told of a young man named Billy-boy. Billy-boy was instructed one summer by his grandmother to collect some fire wood to heat up their home for the winter. He went out in the forest and cut down some trees and laid them out to dry. During the fall months, he cut them up and began to haul them inside, in preparation for the winter. One day his grandmother observed that Billy-boy was bringing in only two or three pieces at a time. The reason he was doing that was because he was using a smaller basket to haul in the wood. After his first two trips from the forest, his grandmother told him; “Billy-boy, you need a bigger basket to bring in the wood”.

I believe Billy-boy’s story is a story for the church. We have been challenged by the Lord to prepare services for an increase. But we’ve decided to minimize our services and abilities. We’re always emphasizing our limitations and magnifying our inabilities. In Billy-boy’s story, he did everything right. At his grandmother’s request, he cut down some trees, dried the wood and hauled them in for the winter. But one thing his grandmother saw him doing wrong was limiting the amount of fire wood he could bring in at a time. Well, to measure up to his grandmother’s expectation, he needed a bigger basket. With a bigger basket he could bring in more fire wood at a time.

I believe this is the message the Lord is giving to the church these days. The Lord has enlarged our borders. He has increased our territory with much more than we had. Look at the amount of educated people we have attending our services. Look at how many electronics and technical means he has provided us. Watch the visionaries at work in our congregations. Why are we not using them? The answer is, we need a bigger basket.

First Chronicles chapter 4, verses 9 and 10, tells a brief story of a man named Jabez. In this story, the Lord made Jabez more honorable than his brothers. Because of this favor he found with the Lord, one day he prayed to the Lord; “Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory” (verse 10, NKJV). Yes! The Lord will give us our heart’s desires, but there are some requirements for anyone desiring to have their territory enlarged.

First. “You must give up the little me mentality”. Our limited view of the Lord is one of the major things that is preventing us from reaching out for the greater things from the Lord. We think way too small for the Lord’s economy and ability. We need to grab hold of a bigger basket, if we want to receive a bigger blessing from the Lord. Don’t you get fed up with hearing what can’t be done? If your desire is to carry only the smaller things of life than you will never experience the joy of knowing the big things.

Second. “Make room for more big things”. When Billy-boy’s grandmother told him to get a bigger basket, she was requiring him to make room for more fire wood. When Jabez prayed to the Lord to enlarge his territory, he was asking the Lord to s-t-r-e-t-c-h him for more. If you want more great things in your life, you must prepare to get some stretch marks. When you’ve obtained several stretch marks, then you will know your basket just got bigger and you’re willing to take in more wood. You’re like a rubber band. You’ll never fulfill your purpose in life until you’ve been stretched. That’s why sometimes your nerves have to be stretched, your patience has to be stretched and your prayers have to be stretched. When you’ve been stretched that is when you are more valuable and being valuable will make room for more big things.

Third. “Hold on to what you’ve received”. If you’re going to give up the “little me mentality”, and “make more room”, than you will have to do something to support what you have in the bigger basket. It’s one thing to give up something you’ve gotten used to, it’s another thing to stretch what you have become. Yet, it is something else to preserve all the blessings you’ve received from the Lord. In this text, Jabez continued his prayer by adding this; that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain”. He was praying that the Lord would enable him to hold to what he had put into his basket.

Preparing for an Anointed Training Session or Preparation for Your Ministry Team

Prepared by Deacon Ronnie G. Robinson; Usher Union President



Have you ever experienced trying to write an outline and the words just do not come to you? Has there ever been a time when you had to be reminded that a deadline is fast approaching AND you have absolutely nothing written? Well I have. There have been many times when I was preparing for a presentation and I drew blanks.

It is during those dark times that I relay (even more so) on a spiritual-anointing to guide me. It is that same spiritual-anointing that I follow to honor our Heavenly Father giving the best presentation that I could give. As long as I relay on the Holy Spirit to inspire me, I've learned how to pursue and meet any challenges that may come my way.

In preparing for any presentation or session, I first ask God for a vision of what he requires of me. I then keep that vision in mind as I prepare.

My next task is to earnestly pray for all of the spiritual-power that God can bestow upon me as I submit to his will. I also ask of him to show me the hearts and minds of the ministry members that requires me to minister to. During this time, I prayerfully formulate a rough draft of the steps that each member must follow to get them from where they are currently to where God wants them to be.

I also make a conscious effort to remember that steps one, two and three totally removes me and my needs out of the picture and instead places each ministry team member and their needs directly in front of the purposes that God has for their lives. I then become transparent after having shepherded the sheep and to the Good Shepherd.

I continue to frame, reframe; frame, reframe and frame, reframe steps in my mind until peace comes to my heart. I view that peace as the confirmation from the Holy Spirit that I have arrived, that all the pieces are correctly joined together. I listen intentional for and follow the Spirit in developing the teaching outline.

Once the steps are laid out, I then seek different steps to use in my presentation. My ultimate goal is to draw the students into the learning process from the very beginning of my presentation. The type of teaching can range from: a) Individuals writing short answers to collect their thoughts; b) Members sharing answers in small groups of two or three or in the large group; and c) Practicing the skill together.

Other Ingredients in a Spirit-Anointed Small Group Meeting Include:

1. **Build spiritual sensitivity through praise, worship and prayer, welcoming the Holy Spirit as the ultimate teacher/group leader.** We must enter God's presence in praise and worship and end the worship time with a prayer for the Holy Spirit to give knowledge to the group during our time together.
2. **Capture everyone's heart and attention with a story.** Introduce the discussion with a prop that expresses a real-life situation which involves the topic being explored in that class.
3. **Set the pace with open, honest sharing.** The leader may choose to share an anointed insight God gave him, and how this met a real-life need or dilemma he was facing.
4. **Involve all group members in sharing of revelations.** Go around the group and have members read give their answer. Have them share what God spoke to them from these verses and what practical difference it makes in their life. Draw out the timid students by inviting them to share, and limit the naturally talkative. (Continued on page 6)

Disclosure is Always the Best Policy

Written By Reverend Dr. James Smith, Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church



I was debating whether to write this article but I concluded that maybe it will help some perspective pastor.

Failure to disclose has been a serious problem for a lot of ministers and especially those who may be a candidate for a church. I hear the phrase quite often, "If the Lord has forgiven me and has called me into the ministry, why do I have to share my past with anyone." Well, the simple answer to the question is, you don't. The real question ought to be, "do I want to be a successful pastor, or do I just want to get a church."

I have found from the workshops I have facilitated over the years and calls that I get from church members and pastors are, that as long as things are going well at a church, no one is particularly concerned about the pastor's past. But as soon as something occurs that brings on opposition to the Pastor, the same folks began digging into pastor's background for negative information.

Well the pastor and or prospective pastor can minimize the impact of this by giving a full disclosure. Now, this does not mean that one has to give every little detail of some negatives in his or her background but one does need to inform or mention the matter or matters to the church. We need to remember that as soon as conflict began, one of the first things that opposing members do is check into your background to see what they can find to use against you.

As a former practicing attorney, I was primarily a defense lawyer. And one of the things I learned and used successfully in defending my clients was how to use my client's bad record. I found that it was much better for me to question my client about his bad record and allow him to share it, rather than ignore it and allow the prosecution to bring it out on cross examination. When I do it, the impact is minimized. If the prosecution does it, the impact is maximized.

I believe the basic concept works in the ministry. However, we must be realistic. Some churches are not going to be receptive regardless, but what God has for you is for you. Some churches would not have called the Apostle Paul as their pastor. Once his resume was received and they observed that he had been imprisoned on several occasions, he would have been finished. There would have been no attempt to find out the reasons or to get an explanation. Just the fact that it was mentioned was enough for him to be eliminated. Can you visualize what they would have missed, a man whose letters we read and preach on Sunday mornings, a man who said, "for God I live and for God I die." I believe disclosure is always the best policy."

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Disclaimer

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Preparing for an Anointed Training Session, Continued page 4

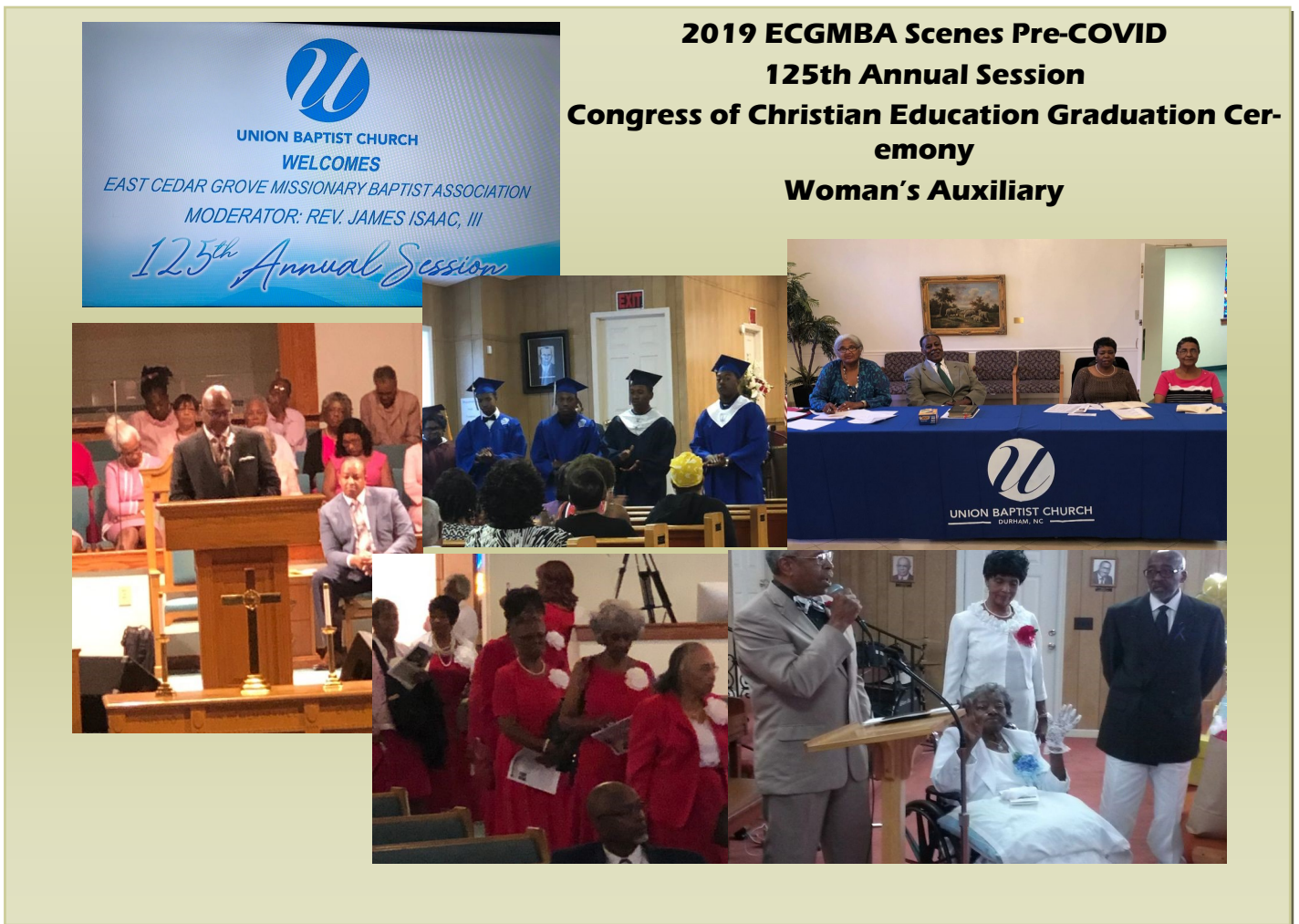
5. Have an anointed teaching element and/or a filler exercise in case discussion lags. The anointed teaching should be something God has freshly revealed to the teacher concerning the lesson. The filler exercise is something that would be interesting to the team members but which won't be tragic if it is missed.

6. Close with a time of journaling, sharing journaling and ministry. Give a few minutes for God to speak through two-way journaling. Let the group pray and lay hands on those with needs. Close with a prayer of thanksgiving to the Holy Spirit for His presence during the meeting.

From first-hand experience, I know what it feels like to you have put together a dynamite outline and the only person that understood any of it was me. This happened because I failed to rely on Jesus as the Good Shepherd and I also did not honor The Holy Spirit as my Keeper.

In closing, I admonish you to pray fervently and effectively over each task that you will be assigned to present.

Sincerely,
 Deacon Ronnie G. Robinson,
 Ronnie G. Robinson
 Usher Union President , ECGMBA



God's Plan for Our Families

Written by Dr. Warren L. Herndon, Visiting Minister, Mount Zoar Missionary Baptist Church



In the Black Church, our most valued institution, we have been Blessed and Highly Favored in this new year of 2021 and we have a new season of opportunity through our faith. So, as we look back over last year's challenges such as: 1) Pandemic, 2) Police Brutality, 3) Students out of schools, 4) and other issues of concerns, we can see how the hand of God has sustained us. Throughout all of these issues, crises and challenges; as a church family, we must find a way to help each other by calling, sharing and supporting our children, grandchildren and siblings. In these first eight months, we are still seeking "The Hands of God", as our schools, community organizations and churches begin to open our doors for our children, students and other young people in our neighborhoods. In this New Season, let us "Walk in Our Callings" that was purposed in us by God.

As "Believers" in this new season of blessings, I am excited to write this article to encourage each of us to share with our family members that God Is Continuing to Bless Our Families, even in "These Times" As one of "The Spiritual Leaders" in our families, I challenge you to seek God's Plan for your life. We must continue to stay in His will to receive His favor and blessings during these trying times. As parents, grandparents, elders and other leaders, we are so proud of our children, students, young adults and our seniors in our families. Our Elders and Grandparents gave us all they could in the old days, before "God Called Them Home".

Last year, was a "Difficult Year" and as believers, our faith teaches us that "Our God is Faithful to Families". The Bible teaches us that the family was ordained by God to illustrate the unity of God and to be an example of how we should love each other unconditionally. When the family is in unity, the church can be in unity and it can expand Christ's Kingdom in the World, (1 Corinthians 13).

In summary, our God created the Heavens and Earth and He is always present with us. He is "The Almighty Savior" and wants our families to "Stay in Unity" and multiply for Generations to come. So, in this "Trying Year with CV-19 Numbers Rising Up Again", we must continue to Read our Bibles, pray daily for one another and seek God's Favor for our lives. Additionally, as parents, grandparents, elders and other love ones, we are to LOVE, SUPPORT and ENCOURAGE our children, teenagers and young adults. It is in "God's Plan" to give us a future and a hope. "Seek the Hand of The Lord" for our relatives and family members purpose in these last four months in this year. Now, what is the teaching in this article? Well, I am glad you asked. The following principals will lead, guide and give insight for us throughout our Christian Journey.

"The 7 Key Principals To Successful Family Interactions"

1. To "Read and Study" your Bible Daily.
2. For each family to Pray, Seek and call out to God, for "Your Life Purpose"
3. To seek to have a "Daily Relationship with God".
4. Learn to "Talk and Listen to your Parents".
5. Seek and find "A Family Member to Read to, Discuss and Mentor You" in The Word.
6. Call on and "Find a Spiritual Mother or Father ". Each family must "Have a Spiritual Leader or Leaders" in good times and bad times.

African-American Church Family, we are "Believers" and seek "God's Favor" over our lives and shall be looking for our "Blessings and our Strength" in this year of "Transition and Transformation" (Romans 12:2). So, church and families; please stay "Faithful and Encouraged" in these difficult times.

Use What You Have

1 Peter 4:10, Psalm 100:2

Written by Reverend Joyce D. Clayton, Asst. Pastor, New Red Mountain Missionary Baptist Church



Please allow me to share a little story with you. In my neighborhood, across the street lives a little pint-sized Beagle-like dog whose name is *Buddy*. He appears to be about 12 inches tall and 20 pounds when wet. He stays alert and patrols the neighborhood daily. He examines and monitors our homes and grounds that he considers his territory. Buddy patrols the neighborhood going from house to house, and then crossing over streets checking out his turf making sure that all is well. And, the story does not end there. When he finishes his tour of duty he returns back home, gets a bit to eat and a little water, and finds his favorite place and rests for a while! But like clockwork, at 2:50 pm Buddy stands up and goes near the end of the

property at the street as he awaits the arrival of the school bus with the children of his home. When they get off the school bus, he gleefully wagging his tail welcomes the children and escorts them home! But his day's work is still not over. He plays with the children for a while as they chase him and throw balls for him to catch. Buddy finishes those tasks and rests on the grounds; but if a stranger or an unfamiliar car comes into his territory, he arises and barks letting them know that they are not welcome. They are the enemy and should flee immediately!

Oh, how safe we feel with 12-inch-tall Buddy! But there is one more thing I need to tell you about Buddy. *He favors one of his legs.* He puts most of his weight on three of his legs and slightly carries the other elevated leg. *It is as if Buddy does not realize that he has a limitation.* He starts his day and ends it the same way— taking his work seriously.

Buddy seems to accept the concept that you must use what you have been given. Although small in stature, he does not see his size as a barrier. I have seen him take on German Shepherds and Pit Bulls. You see he is endowed with a very loud and deep voice— one of his assets. When he barks, it seems like the ground rattles— at least the entire neighborhood hears his call to order! Buddy seems to be fearless! I see him in the morning heading out on his mission— entering my yard, going behind the garage and along the boundaries of the property making his mark, sniffing and putting birds, squirrels and people on alert. You see, he considered his approval necessary for them to hang around. You see, Buddy simply uses what he has on his little three legs!

So, I have a question for you and for me— can a Christian learn anything valuable from Buddy's example? Would the world be a better place if there were more Buddys in it? Wouldn't the body of Christ, the local church of baptized believers, be a lot healthier and productive doing the will of God if more of us were the Buddys of the world? Buddy doesn't let anything stop him from his daytime and nighttime routines. He works, serves and wags his tail. 1 Peter 4:10 tells believers that *"10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."* And Psalm 100:2 reminds us to *"Serve the Lord with Gladness, come before his presence with thanksgiving."*

Therefore, should God's Children of the Light make excuses about limitations? How much of the *"Buddy Model of Discipleship"* is alive in the church? Let us use our spiritual gifts, whatever they may be—, the gifts of encouraging, serving, preaching, teaching, prophesy, healing, administration, knowledge, evangelism, faith, hospitality, leadership and others to do the Lord's will. No more procrastinations and rationalizing! Buddy keeps on keeping on and living *"within his purpose with great joy."* So, *let us self-examine, listen to the voice of the Lord and use what God has given us as we serve others and please Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Just use what you have!*

Family

Written by Reverend Dr. William E. Daye
 Founder and Pastor Emeritus, Peace Missionary Baptist Church, Durham, NC



It is as early as Genesis 10 that families are mentioned. The Lord saw or designed us to be families. He so designed us to have such relationships/kinships! Our DNA tells us something about such. There is this sense of oneness, kinship, and how we are tied together. So, I am tied to you and you are tied to me. I can't drop that off somewhere along the way of life, but that is all the way to the grave. When families are torn apart, split apart, separated and don't get along and can't stand one another; what does the God who made us to be families sense- how does he feel? People need to stop and think about family and remember "*who*" made us to be family!

I am so proud to be a part of a family consisting of dad, mom, sisters and brothers, for what we did and meant to each other. For God designed us to be family, something which we didn't design ourselves or for ourselves. Then, it is great, wonderful, and delightful for us to take to another dimension where we come together with other "*kindred*", extended family; and then there is another family with broader boundaries which the Lord has designed which is *the Church!* There is to be peace, support and love in every dimension of "family."

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Remembering The Ninety-Ninth Annual Session of East Cedar Grove Missionary Baptist Association  
 Yearbook of Annual Session Minutes July 7, 1994

**Sermon by Rev. Lola Mangum, Woman's Auxiliary President**

**Subject: "Inherit the Nature of God; Text Matthew 9:35**

Rev. Ralph Mangum introduced his wife, Rev. Lola Mangum, President of the Woman's Auxiliary. She is born again and is a Christian lady. Rev. Mangum gave honor to God, recognized all quest on the pulpit and recognized her family. She thanked all for their presence... prayed and asked God for her dependence on Him and not on herself.

Reverend Mangum's text was Matthew 9:35 and her subject was "***Inherit the Nature of God***" [Her message follows: There are certain characteristics that all Christians should have. We need to be concerned about mankind.- where he is going to spend eternity. God loves us and he proved it because he gave his only begotten son. We have something to do in this world. We need to help out our fellow man. You need to be concerned about somebody other than yourself. When we are born (ed) again we become relative of God. When we are born again we should be like a city that sits on a hill. We need to be that light that men and women can see so they won't walk in the dark. It's time we face facts and live the life that God wants us to live. "It was God that brought me out of the darkness and into the marvelous light." Aren't you glad that God is your shepherd?" It's time for me to take on the nature of God. Do something for mankind. Look around to see what you see. After you see what you see do something about it. Take someone in you arms and tell them that you love them and God loves you too. Somebody wants to know about Jesus. On your way up don't go by yourself; take someone with you. Start in your home. Take someone by the hand., read the scriptures- have a prayer. I thank God [my] mother had the nature of prayer. Amen. The sermon was followed by a song sung by Sister Magdalene Ragland entitled Your Grace and Mercy. Sister Glennie Carver presiding, thanked Rev. Magnum for her message.

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## ***The Impact of COVID on My Life: My Story***

Written by Deaconess Peggy R. Bullock, Member New Red Mountain Missionary Baptist Church

Oh how it hit me , COVID that is. March , 2020 brought a lot of sorrow for my family and me. First of all , the unexpected death of my beloved husband, father , and grandfather occurred just as covid hit . Secondly, as we prepared to celebrate his life with family and friends, COVID restrictions were issued. This meant that no regular funeral could happen. This was painful for me as I knew that Clinton had touched so many lives in he community and church and I wanted to give others an opportunity to share their experiences. Thirdly , I was unable to go the place that I knew would lend so much support , i.e. New Red Mountain Church. I needed the hugs , assurances , and peace that I had received there during other times of grief. There were other losses of family and friends who I could not share in their grief in person. Not being able to get with the Red Hat ladies was also painful as I could have used the fellowship and kindred spirit hat we share when we get together.

As I look back over the past year , I can see some things that were good. I got to spend more time with my sons and grandchildren. We have laughed, cried, and shared precious memories about our loved one. In addition , I have come to realize how much of my life centered around being involved in the church i.e. rehearsals, meetings and worship services Oh how I have missed all the activities and having human contact.

Technology cannot replace being in the presence of family and friends. For me , I now have a greater appreciation for where God has placed me. Romans 8 : 28 has become my mainstay. I realize more strongly that none of the events in my life have been a surprise to God and that some good has come about.

## ***COVI-19 and Its Impact***

Written by Deaconess Margo Bullock Harris, Member New Red Mountain Missionary Baptist Church

In reflecting on COVID-19 and its impact on my life, Proverbs 16:9 resonated in my spirit. We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps (NLT). Traveling plans were nullified. We were isolation from loved ones, as a result of being quarantined. The purchasing of necessary commodities was practically impossible. Basically, there was a complete shift in the standards of normality. This experience exemplified that the fruition of my perfect plans depended on whether God gives permission. And being that this was a global pandemic, God pronounced a profound “NO” to the world’s daily activities.

Colossian 4:5 speaks these words: Live wisely among those who are not Christians and make the most of every opportunity (NLT). While living through this pandemic, my decision was to not squander the time it afforded me. Having set my mind to be productive, many planned goals were initiated and some completed. The concept of pursuing a balanced life spiritually, physically, socially and intellectually had been established as the goal of being retired. We have become such a hurried society. Coronavirus definitely slowed down the societal pace. For me, more time was spent reflecting on the goodness and the grace of God in my life.

We have a promise keeping God. Throughout this ordeal, God’s amazing grace was sufficient. And for that, I am extremely grateful. My grace is sufficient for you. My lovingkindness and My mercy are more than enough-always available-regardless of the situation; for My power is being perfected and is completed and shows itself most effectively in your weakness. 2Corinthaian 12:9 (AMP).

**East Cedar Grove Missionary Baptist Association of NC, Inc.  
In Remembrance & In Loving Memory  
Servants, Leaders & Laborers in the Lord’s Vineyard**

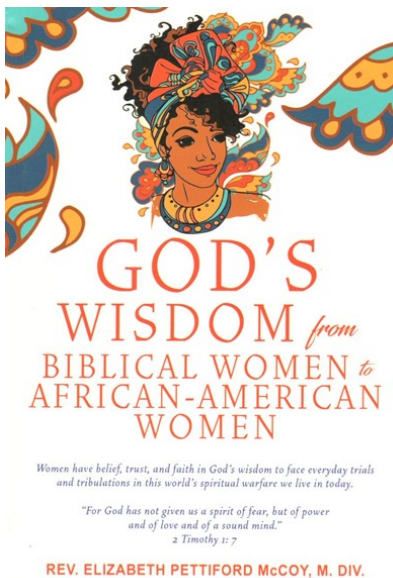


**Reverend Harold F. Trice, Sr., Former Moderator, ECGMBA, Pastor Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, Butner, NC  
Reverend Norman T. Davis, Former Pastor Mount Zoar Missionary Baptist Church, Durham, NC**

*“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but to all who crave His appearing. - 2 Timothy 4:7-8*

**Congratulations Reverend Elizabeth McCoy**

**2nd Vice President, Woman’s Auxiliary, ECGMBA  
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***LET US REMEMBE TO PRAY  
FOR THE SICK, BEREAVED & SHUT-INS IN ECGMBA & BEYOND ;& FOR OUR  
COUNTRY AND THE WORLD***

***“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. “  
(Phil. 4:19)***

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