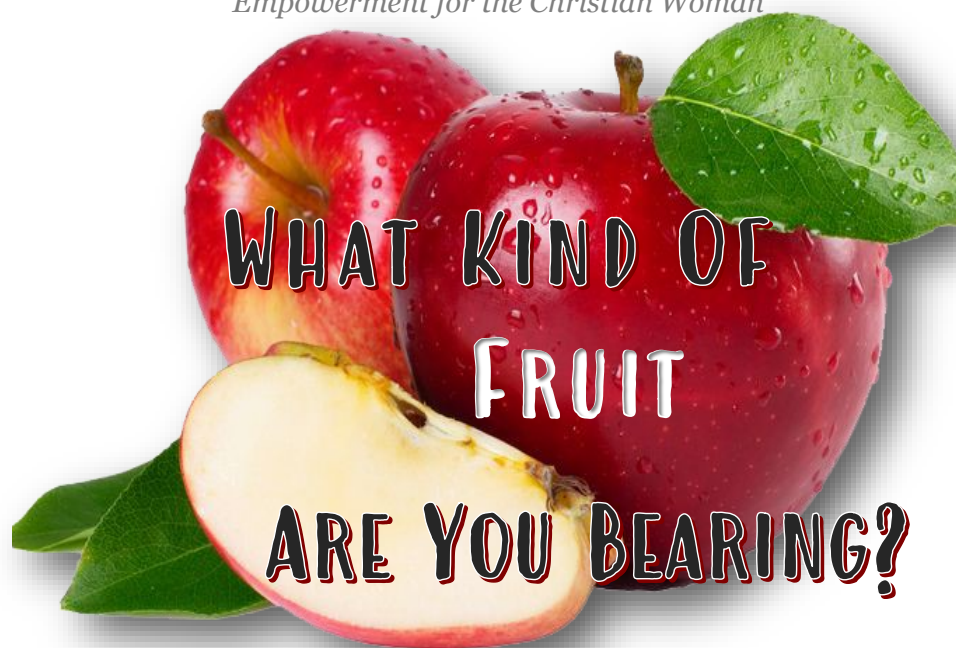




Sisters in the Spirit Ministries Newsletter

Empowerment for the Christian Woman



By Rev. Dr. Katrina White Brown

Back in the day, my parents used to observe that “the apple don’t fall far from the tree.” This reference was always made whenever the neighborhood boys branded as the “holy terrors” would act up. The parents of these kids had developed a reputation as being negligent, disrespectful, and irresponsible. As such they were characterized as “bad parents.” These neighborhood nuisances were simply the bad fruit - offspring spored from the rotten tree.

Although today’s parents are far more politically

correct in not labeling children as bad kids, the reference is nonetheless accurate when describing the fruit resulting from corrupt trees. People, like trees, are known by their fruit.

Jesus used that analogy while teaching the multitudes listening to the Sermon on the Mount. He said “no good tree bears bad fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart. And an evil man brings evil

things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.” (Luke 6:43-45) Simply stated, your outward actions reflect the inward condition of your heart.

Jesus used a lot of agricultural references in His teachings. In John 15 Jesus refers to himself as “the true vine,” and to God the Creator as “the gardener” who cares for the branches to make them fruitful. Jesus explained that God cuts off every branch that bears no fruit. Conversely, Jesus said that every branch which bears

Continues on page 6

20 SECONDS OF PRAISE



Health officials recommend washing your hands frequently for a minimum of 20 seconds as a primary defense against germs. You can time this by singing a verse and chorus of:

Walk in the Light

By The Georgia Mass Choir

Chorus: Walk in the Light
Beautiful Light

Ain’t it wonderful

How the Light shines—repeat 1x

Verse: The Lord’s been good to me
Brought me from a mighty long way

Gave me food and shelter

I thank Him for His grace

I keep my hands in the Master’s hand, and I never go astray

I’m trusting, trusting in the Lord.

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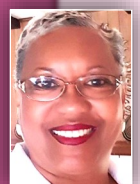
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Sisters in the Spirit is an outreach ministry created to empower Christian women in better serving the Lord. We are here to help "equip God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ..."

Ephesians 4:12



Sisters, here's a news flash ... you have haters. For some this really isn't news, but for others it's a pretty shocking revelation.

I know we would love positive interactions and outcomes with everyone we meet, but it just doesn't happen that way. In fact, there are people who don't know you; never laid eyes on you; and know absolutely nothing about you, EXCEPT what your haters say about you. Yet these people have nothing good for you. They don't have good wishes, good intentions, good tidings, or goodness in their spirit for you. You did nothing *to them*, but you can do everything *for them* ... by praying for them.

Let me tell you about my haters. They hate me because I'm:

- a Christian
 - a Black woman
 - a preacher of the Gospel of Christ
 - intelligent, articulate, and educated
 - boldly walking in the authority that comes from Christ Jesus
- Any one of those things makes some people mad. Since I'm all of the above, I know that there is always somebody who has an issue with me.

Please don't think that I am boasting my Sisters, because I'm also:

- a sinner in need of God's salvation and forgiveness every day of my life
- standing in need of God's grace and mercy, and mindful of my doubts and fears
- disobedient at times and don't operate in accordance to the Will of God

But, I know who I am and whose I am, and I will not deny who God called me to be for the sake of political correctness or at the risk of offending someone who doesn't even love themselves, much less anyone else.

Acknowledging the haters doesn't make it any easier to feel good about having them, but it does give you power over them. Knowledge is power! Romans 12 says that by showing love to those who don't love you, *you will heap burning coals on their heads*. God will reveal your haters. This gives you a prayer roadmap, directing you to those who need your prayers.

Pray for your haters. This is the unconventional wisdom Jesus preached during the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus acknowledged to the crowd listening to Him *"you have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."* (Matthew 5:43-45)

In my Spirit for you my Sisters, is that you overcome evil with good by praying for your haters. Trust in the Holy Spirit to help us show love to those for whom we may not feel love. You'll be amazed by how God will use your righteous prayers to make your enemies your footstool.

Love, Peace, and Blessings Always,
Katrina W. Brown

TO



OR NOT TO



THAT IS THE CONFUSING QUESTION

To mask or not to mask ... that is the confusing question. Borrowing from the dilemma that the protagonist faced in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, who was confused by whether or not "to be or not to be," the quandary over continuing to wear masks as a way of combatting COVID-19 is just as vexing.

Hamlet's predicament was initiated by his overwhelming grief and agony over the hardships he had faced in his life. His "to be or not to be" speech was actually a life or death decision. He was deliberating whether or not to go on with his life.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, wearing a mask forced similar life-or-death contemplation. To wear a mask translated into choosing life, while failing to wear one equated to choosing sickness or even death. Two years later, science has progressed enough so that choosing to mask or not to mask seems to no longer be a determining factor of survival in this on-going COVID-19 environment.

Although COVID-19 numbers remain high in most of the United States, the number of new cases and hospitalizations is trending down. As such, many states are lifting indoor masks mandates. This includes California, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington. "Given the declining cases and declining hospitalizations, we feel comfortable to lift mask mandates," noted New York's Governor Kathy Hochul.

With the changing rules comes a shift in the responsibility to enact mask mandates. It's a shift that puts local leaders and especially school boards, right in the middle of one of the most divisive issues of the pandemic, as parents struggle with how to keep their children safe. Particularly parents with children too young to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, the wearing of masks seems to be the safest alternative in protecting their children.

The Centers for Disease Control and Pre-

vention (CDC) just recently relaxed mask guidelines for almost 70% of the U.S. population. The health agency based its decision on the fact that 63% of U.S.'s 3200 counties are at low or medium risk for COVID-19. Based on this, CDC officials advised people to wear masks indoors in counties where spread of the virus was deemed substantial or high.

Most importantly, the agency is still advising people, including schoolchildren, to wear masks where the risk of COVID-19 is high. The new recommendations do not change the requirement to wear masks on public transportation and indoors in airports, train stations and bus stations. But the CDC guidelines for other indoor spaces aren't binding, meaning cities and institutions in areas of low risk may set their own rules. However, the CDC says people with COVID-19 symptoms or who test positive should not stop wearing masks.

The CDC has developed a color-coded map using orange, yellow, and green as a way of visually identifying the level of risk throughout the U.S. In green counties, the risk is LOW. Local officials can drop any indoor masking rules. In yellow counties, the risk is MEDIUM. This means people at high risk for severe disease should be cautious. Orange designates the risk is HIGH. These are the places where the CDC suggests masking should be universal. (See the map on page 5)

The agency still strongly recommends that everyone get vaccinated and boosted, if they haven't already, and to get tested if they feel sick. People with COVID-19 symptoms, a positive COVID-19 test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should continue to mask up, regardless of transmission rates in their area, the CDC said.

So, how do you know whether to mask or not to mask? The CDC recommends using layered prevention strategies, which include staying up to date on vaccines

and wearing masks, as a means of preventing severe illness and further reducing the strain on the healthcare system. Also, the color-coded community levels are based on the latest data, and will help localities decide what prevention steps to take.

When community levels are LOW (green) - it is recommended that you wear a mask based on your personal preference, informed by your personal level of risk. When community levels are MEDIUM (yellow) - if you are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe illness, talk to your healthcare provider about additional precautions, such as wearing masks or respirators indoors in public. When community levels are HIGH (orange) - wear a well-fitting mask indoors in public, regardless of vaccination status or individual risk (including in K-12 schools and other community settings). If you are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe illness, wear a mask or respirator that provides you with greater protection. You may choose to wear a mask or respirator that offers greater protection in certain situations, such as when you are with people at higher risk for severe illness, or if you are at higher risk for severe illness.

Also, it is important to wear a mask or respirator when you are sick or caring for someone who is sick with COVID-19. When caring for someone who is sick with COVID-19, a respirator will provide you the best level of protection. If you live with or have social contact with someone at high risk for severe illness, consider testing yourself for infection before you get together, and wearing a mask when you are indoors with them.

Keep in mind however, that there are still many unknowns when it comes to COVID-19. Although the protocols are confusing, are an inconvenience, and

Continues on page 5



The Search for Black History

February is Black History Month. Word search this puzzle for those things associated with Black history as well as Biblical history.

Just for Fun

K C G C E Q U A L I T Y N O N V I O L E N C E A
G R A F U Q S I R R A H A L I M A K K N O T L F
O N J D A N A I P O I H T E S X C V N O C T E L
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T H S K N V C T G W S L A V E R Y A S U N T M B
T V B E R I U Y Y J X E P B V I A R R R D I H F
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D G I J R P H S U U M I F N C T I E D H C R I S
D L X R H A K T T T D O A Q H S W R N T E E E L
Q Q Q G T T C L U G D M O G Z F E W A N I V H A
R S H P V E U K C L B N I H N C L O N O Y I S U
D A T D M C E R O U N R O X C E N O A M M D C T
F V A S H T I N T B L I P M M D H D I Y J K N I
J B A N E W R T T I A T T M S S O S R R V O Q R
O U A C V T E O V H T M O R E E J O A O I A D I
R K N D A I O I S O A S A G A D D N M T X X U P
Z B N E R C C R C A E M R H E M V P A S M G F S
X V Q R T E I Y P S P E E C F H R R O I T A P O
Q A A R U E O R G G G A I N V O G D X H W C X R
L H Y N H B E I F A A T R Q D E Q S J K S L M G
Y Y I H S I Y N T A S G K K T M M F A C E I Q E
X C R U G I R I T U Z G P N S C E E P A W W B N
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J X O X H N H W G A B O L I T I O N T B E P R T

ABOLITION
BLACK HISTORY MONTH
CIVIL RIGHTS
DR MARTIN LUTHER KING
HARRIET TUBMAN
JUNETEENTH
MOSES
ROSA PARKS
TRUTH

AFRICA
BUS BOYCOTT
CIVIL WAR
EQUALITY
INTEGRATION
JUSTICE
NEGRO SPIRITUALS
SEGREGATION
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BISHOP DESMOND TUTU
CARTER WOODSON
DIVERSITY
EUNICH
JOHN LEWIS
MARIAN ANDERSON
PROTESTS
THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT

TO MASK OR NOT TO MASK ...

Continued from page 3

have caused depression and anxiety for a lot of people, these protocols have proven to save lives. In a mask-weary world where some are ready to just stop wearing them and face whatever the consequences, the CDC relaxing some of the mask mandates brings welcome relief.

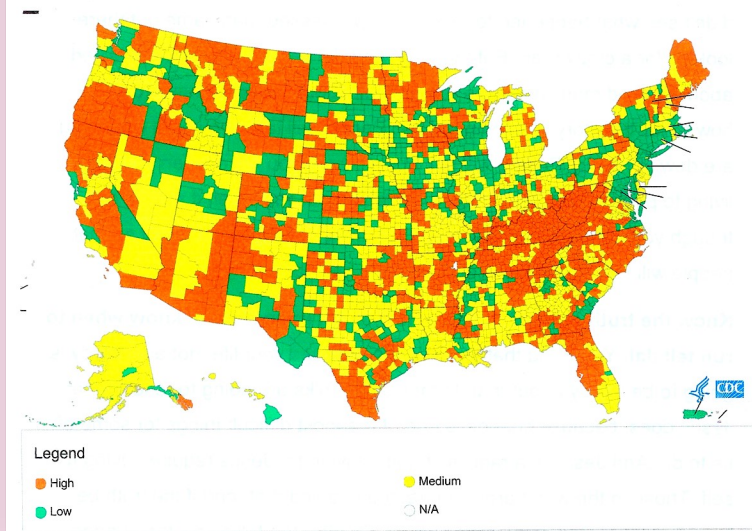
But because there are so many unanswered questions, it still may be better to take caution: the unknowns are significant. For example: how will the virus respond to the vaccine long-term? What are we to do about the variants? How long are the vaccines effective? How are we to know that everyone not wearing a mask is vaccinated? The list of questions goes on and on.

At the end of Hamlet's timeless soliloquy, he ultimately decides "to be". The number of unknowns associated with death were overwhelming - he decided to remain in the familiar surrounding of his life. Using Hamlet's actions as a guide, the unknowns of what is next for COVID-19 ought to be more than enough for people to make a decision on whether to continue wearing a mask, even with the CDC relaxing some of the guidelines.

We don't know what the future of COVID-19 is. It may always be a fact of our lives, not just now but forever. But in the words of Shakespeare, choosing to continue to wear a mask is not the "conscious making a coward of us all." Wearing a mask could simply be the conscious making of a decision "to be." For some, to mask or not to mask may create a dilemma, but the decision should be made based on credible information, science, and research; not just emotions.

U.S. COVID-19 Community Levels by County

Data provided by CDC
Updated: Feb. 24, 2022



Information for this article came from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov), and the News Nation website [newsnationnow.com](https://www.newsnationnow.com)

The Story of the



This is the story of the blind girl. Her story is not only sad but also unfortunate, because the girl hated herself purely because she was blind. Although she suffered from self-hatred, she had a boyfriend who she loved, and her boyfriend dearly loved her. His unconditional love made him willing to do anything for her.

The blind girl's boyfriend was always there for her, and she knew that he wanted to spend the rest of his life with her. But each time he proposed marriage to her, she would answer by saying "if only I could see, I would marry you."

Life continued like this for years. The blind girl kept refusing to marry her boyfriend; he continued in his willingness to do anything for her.

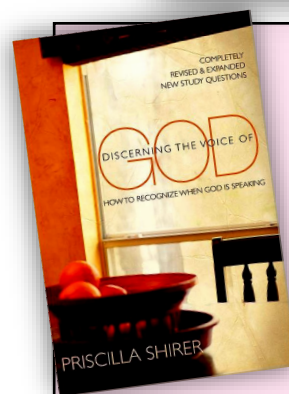
One day science and medicine prevailed. An operation had been perfected which would allow her to gain sight, but it required the donation of healthy eyes. After a short while, healthy eyes were donated on her behalf and she immediately had the operation.

Finally, her dream had come true. She was able to see everything. She could hardly wait to see her boyfriend and accept his proposal of marriage as she had promised. The girl was shocked however, to discover that her boyfriend was also blind. Since she loathed blind people (as she loathed herself), she refused to marry him. Heartbroken and in tears, he walked out of her life and was never seen again. The girl later discovered that it was her boyfriend who donated the healthy eyes that enabled her to see. As a result of his love and his willingness to do anything he could for her, he lost his sight.

What a remarkable portrait of Christ this story paints. Because of His great love for us and His willingness to do whatever He could for us, He gave up His life. And even though we promise God that we will change if only He would deliver us from our unwanted situations, when deliverance comes, we often forget our commitment to the Lord.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) When our circumstances change, our minds and behavior changes as well. We forget our promises to God, and we forget His sacrifice for us. But Christ never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and He loves us so much that He sacrificed everything for us.

Stop allowing selfishness and self-loathing to keep you in blindness. Never lose sight of how good and faithful the Lord is - His love never fails.



DISCERNING THE VOICE OF GOD BY PRISCILLA SHIRER

In the words of Priscilla Shirer, *"when Jesus walked the earth, He willingly revealed himself to everyone around Him, knowing full well that many, if not most, would reject Him. Why then would He not desire deeply to speak to us - we who have received Him by faith through His mercy and grace? He desires to speak to us. In fact, He places a high priority on this because it's so crucial to the kind of relationship He wants to have with us. And so, knowing this, we can't help but ask ...*

- *Then why don't we hear Him?*
- *What keeps us from recognizing Him?*
- *How can we know when He is speaking?"*

According to Priscilla Shirer, "that's what **Discerning the Voice of God** is all about. Rev. Shirer offers an opportunity to share what she has learned, and how each reader of her book can grow to experience in seeking to hear from the Lord.

The back cover of the book points out that "wherever you are in your spiritual walk, God will find a way to speak to you in a way you will understand." Rev. Shirer offers ways of knowing if the voice you are hearing in your head, and indeed in your spirit, is the voice of God, rather than the enemy's voice.

The book is organized into three sections which addresses: Part 1 - Realize the Way He Speaks; Part 2 - Recognize the Sound of His Voice; and Part 3 - Remember What He Wants to Accomplish. She includes many of her personal experiences as she grew in her relationship with the Lord. The journey through the growth process - the uncertainty, the waiting, the frustration - is what Rev. Shirer shares as encouragement to the reader. *"I've neither begun nor finished simply by reading a book or taking a course, but rather through the patient work that the Lord has done, and is still doing, in my own life in very practical ways. I've often felt like the journey may not have been worth it and that I'll never get this right. But I hope these personal experiences will show you how each step with Him has helped me see more clearly than before."*

At the end of each chapter are challenges to respond to designed to "help you hear His voice more clearly in your life."

This book is a must-read for anyone who longs to hear God's voice, or seeking more confidence that they are hearing His direction for their lives. **Discerning the Voice of God** is available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

WHAT KIND OF FRUIT ARE YOU BEARING?

Continued from page 1

fruit will be pruned to become even more fruitful.

As Christians, we must perform fruitful self-examination to determine whether our actions will get us cut off or pruned by the Lord. We are the branches. The fruitful ones are the true believers who, by their living for Christ, are producing much fruit. The unproductive branches - those who make a superficial commitment in following Christ - will be separated from the true vine who is Christ Jesus.

Jesus also used a similar analogy when He cursed a fig tree and caused it to wither. The disciples questioned Him about this. He explained that the tree was not bearing any figs, therefore it was not doing what it was supposed to do; producing figs. Although from a distance the fig tree looked productive, upon closer examination Jesus found that the tree was fruitless. As a result, Jesus destroyed it.

This is an indictment that all Christians need to apply to our hearts. If we only appear to be bearing fruit for the Lord because of how we talk, yet our actions for the Lord are unproductive, we are like that fig tree which withered and died because it failed in doing what it was created to do.

What kind of fruit are you bearing? A good yardstick comes from Galatians 5. In his letter Paul tells the Galatians about the fruit of the Spirit, which is the spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit in us. Paul writes "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23) Bearing these fruits require submitting ourselves to the Holy Spirit: the Spirit produces these character traits in us.

The fruits of the Spirit are part of the nature of Christ and manifest in us by living in relationship with Him. We can't obtain them on our own. It is only through knowing Him, loving Him, obeying Him, and imitating Him, that will we stay connected to the true vine and fulfill God's purpose for our lives. If we want the fruit of the Spirit to grow in us, Jesus said we must remain in Him and He in us. Without this connection "you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers..." (John 15:6)

Bearing good fruit comes with a blessed assurance from Jesus. "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." (John 15:7)





Heads bowed down, but not for the right reason.
Heads bowed down in whispers about what the next individual is doing.

Heads not bowed in prayer for what the next individual may need.

Sad, but very true.

May as well lift them up.

Lift your heads up if you're not going to lift that person up in prayer

If your not going to offer a word in season to exhort that person—lift up your heads

Instead, lift up your hands and ask for forgiveness for the gossiping demon with you.

And lift your hands for the healing of the brokenness within you.

Keep them up and feel His power and presence, and know that you are enough.

Editor's Note: Chanell Burnette is an inmate incarcerated at the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women. She is an aspiring writer and journalist, and expects to further pursue these goals upon her release, scheduled for 2024.

Sister Chanell participates with the Prison Journalism Project (PJP). Her first story published by PJP entitled *Using My Voice to Share My 16-Year Journey* was featured in the November 2021 issue of The Sisters in the Spirit Newsletter. SIS has invited Sister Chanell to submit her writings to The Newsletter for publication. "Lift Them Up" is her second piece.

Jesus said to His disciples "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." (Matthew 25: 35-36) Jesus was simply saying to treat all people we encounter as if they were Him. This is no easy task, but what we do for others demonstrates the love that "makes disciples of all nations." So, feed the hungry; give the homeless a place to stay; care for the sick; and visit those in prison.

With almost 10,000 women incarcerated in jails or prisons in Virginia alone, we all have abundant opportunities to show God's love by reaching out to those who are imprisoned. Write letters; donate needed items; and cover with your prayers, all those who are imprisoned. To contact Sister Chanell send your letters to:

Chanell Burnette #1188812
6A-216B FCCW P.O. Box 1000 Troy, VA 22974

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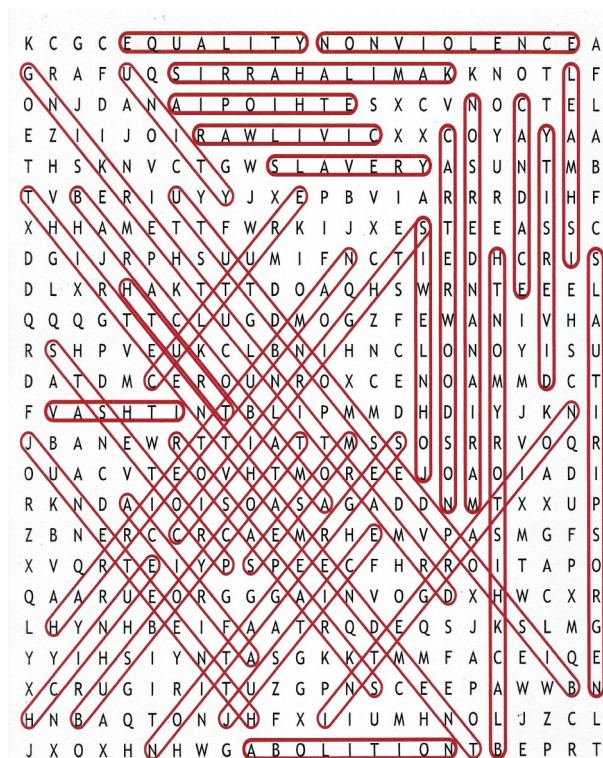
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

The Search for Black History answers



Join **Sisters in the Spirit Ministries** on the
2nd Monday of every month at the
Walter Reed Convalescent Center for the



10:30 am - 11:30 am

7602 Meredith Drive * Gloucester, VA 23061

It's Hallelujah Good Time!



Sisters in the Spirit Newsletter

This is a free monthly publication by **Sisters in the Spirit Ministries, Inc.**, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded to empower women in their knowledge and authority, to better operate in their God-given purpose.

Editor: Dr. Katrina W. Brown

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SEND US YOUR THOUGHTS AND BLESSINGS ...

This is your time and space to share whatever comments about the newsletter with our readers.

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or to

kawbrown@yahoo.com

*Special thanks to
Sister Barbara Howard
of Gloucester, Virginia
who blessed us with her
contributions to the
Last Laugh column and
to the Just for Fun page.*

*"Every time I think of you,
I give thanks to my God."
Philippians 1:3*

THE LAST LAUGH



BEAUTY IS AS BEAUTY DOES

Little Johnny watched with fascination, as his mother rubbed cold cream on her face. "Why are you doing that?" he asked his mother. "To make myself beautiful," she answered. A few minutes later she began removing the cold cream with a tissue. "What's the matter?" asked Little Johnny. "Giving up?"

TERMS OF ENDEARMENT

An elderly couple was invited to have dinner at the home of some long time friends. The husband preceded every request to his wife with a lovely terms of endearment such as "honey," or "darling," or "sweetheart." It was very impressive because the elderly couple had been married almost 70 years.

While the two wives were off in the kitchen, the friend said to the elderly husband how wonderful it was that, after all these years of marriage, he still called his wife by those cute pet names. The elderly husband hung his head down, and in a quiet voice he said thanks for the compliment, but the truth is that I forgot her first name about ten years ago.

WHO'S IN CONTROL?

A husband was advised by a psychiatrist to assert himself more with his wife. "You don't have to let her nag you and always tell you what to do. Go home and show her you are the boss!" the psychiatrist demanded. The man, of course, went right home to his wife and took the doctor's advice. When he walked in the house, he slammed the front door closed, walk over to his wife and told her "woman, from now on, you will be taking orders from me. I want my supper on the table right now. While I'm eating, I want you to go upstairs, get my bath ready and lay out my clothes because I am going out with the boys, and you woman, are going to stay home. And another thing. When I finish my bath, do you know who's going to dress me and comb my hair?" The wife obediently answered "I certainly do," she said. "The Undertaker!"

THE THREE BEARS

Baby Bear went downstairs to the dining room, sat in his little chair and looked into his little bowl. It is empty. Baby Bear cries out in anguish, "somebody's been eating my porridge!!!" Momma Bear comes out of the kitchen exasperated. How many times do we have to go through this?" she said. Momma Bear explained. "Every morning I get up first. I make the coffee, I unload the dishwasher from last night, I take the trash out, I fetch the newspaper, and I clean out the cat's litter box. I then go back upstairs and struggle to get you and Poppa Bear out of bed, which is no easy feat. So now that you have decided to bring your sorry bear-butt downstairs and grace Momma Bear's kitchen with your grumpy presence, listen good, because I'm only going to say this one more time ... I haven't made the porridge yet!"

YOU ARE HOW OLD?

A woman was gambling in a casino for the first time. At the roulette table she said "I have no idea what number to play." A young good-looking man nearby suggested that she play her age. Smiling and batting her eyes, she told the young man "that's just what I'll do. I'll play my age." She then put all her money on number 32. The wheel was spun and number 41 came up. The smile drifted from the woman's face and she fainted.

YOU'RE NEXT

A single woman was talking to her friend and complaining about the fact that every time she goes to a wedding, her relatives are always teasing her about being unmarried. "Whenever one of my elderly aunts sees me at a family wedding, they always come up to me, point their fingers and declare "you're next," the woman said. Her friend, who was also single, pointed out that "my elderly aunts used to do that to me at wedding too. But they stopped after I started doing that to them - at funerals!"

MOM'S DICTIONARY

Whodunit - nobody who lives in your house

Full name - what you call your child when you are mad

Hearsay - what a toddler does whenever you say a bad word

Grandparents - parental strangers who let your children do anything and everything they wouldn't let you do.