



the ENCOURAGER magazine

Apr 2018



WEATHERINGSTORMS

COLUMBIA COMMUNITY CHURCH



ON THE COVER

Congregation members Armah and Cynthia Gray enjoy the beauty of a spring day at The Lake in Columbia during their photoshoot on April 22, 2018..

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A WORD FROM **THE WORD** PASTOR REGINALD L. ELLIOTT

*These things
I have spoken unto you, that
in me ye might*

*have
peace*

*In the world ye shall have tribulation:
but be of good cheer;
I have overcome
the world.*

-- John 16:33, KJV --



WEATHERINGSTORMS



he passage on the opposite page contains some of the last words Jesus spoke to His disciples before His crucifixion. They had been with Him through some difficult times, but the storm they were about to face was greater than any they had previously encountered. In His interactions with them, Jesus always told them the truth. For them, as it is often for us today, the truth is not always pleasant.

He personally was about to face a storm, one so difficult that Matthew records in Chapter 26:39 of his gospel that Jesus prayed to escape it, if it were possible. Sensing in His spirit that to escape it would not be in harmony with His Father's will, He ultimately yielded to His Father's will.

To His disciples He warned that they, too, were going to face a very difficult storm. The truth is that all who live godly in Christ Jesus will have to face storms, i.e. hardship and persecution in life (2 Timothy 3:12). The Bible does not hide this fact from us.

Further, while our humanity may desire to avoid storms, the Spirit driven life accepts the reality of storms, just as Jesus did when He said, "...nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

The hard truth is that storms are inevitable - in the world ye shall have tribulations. Further, the


Scriptures teach us that we are not to become obsessed with trying to avoid storms. Learn from the words Jesus told His disciples.



First, having been forewarned that storms are coming, we are not to let the storms drive us into a state of depression. Jesus said He is forewarning you that you might have peace in Him. Don't be

troubled, the storm is coming but it is not going to destroy you because He has given you His peace. So be of good cheer, even in the midst of life's storms.

Now you may ask, "How can I be of good cheer in the midst of storms?" Jesus gives the answer - because "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). As a believer, we are in Christ; we share in Christ's victories beginning at Calvary and all throughout life. Because He is victor and has overcome the world, as long as we are in Him we are also overcomers.

So how do we overcome life's storms? Accept that storms are a part of life and know that your victory comes from abiding in Him who is victorious over everything. Our victory, like our salvation, like our healing, like our sanctification is all in Jesus. How to overcome, abide in Him. Be of good cheer, I (Jesus) have overcome the world. In Jesus we become overcomers. 

CHRISTIAN COMEDY CORNER

CAROLYN JACKSON
COLLIN DUNLAP

REMEMBER

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine"

Proverbs 17:22 (KJV)

With this publication, we bid a fond farewell to **Sis. Cynthia Johnson-Floyd**, and we give thanks for her contributions to the Comedy Corner.

Honk if you love Jesus. Text while driving if you want to meet Him!

Looking For Employment: A British doctor says we took a man's liver, put it in another man, and in 6 weeks, he is looking for a job." The German doctor says: "That's nothing, in Germany we took part of a brain, put it in another man, and in 4 weeks he is looking for a job." The Russian doctor says, "Gentlemen, we took half a heart from a man, put it in another's chest, and in 2 weeks he is looking for a job." The American doctor laughs: "You are all behind us. We took a man with no

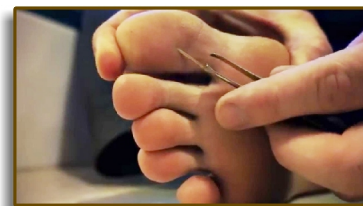
brain, no heart, and no liver and made him President. Now the whole country is looking for a job!"




We welcome CCC's newest comedy contributor, **Bro. Collin Dunlap**. I trust you will enjoy his submissions this year. This is comedy from a younger point of view!! Now for some laughter!

Weathering the Storm

Warren's foot was hurting, so he went to the doctor. The doctor told him he had an infection and she would remove the splinter. Now Warren was an usher at church, and he tried to back out of the job because of his injured foot. Warren told his head usher, I got a splinter in my foot, and I am unable to work. The head usher replied, "So what, I got wires from an operation in mine." The head usher said no matter if its rain, sleet, or snow, you better get yourself to church, even if your car isn't working and said, "By faith you better walk!"



On a rainy Sunday, Bob and his mom were driving to church for Sunday school. Bob said, "Why do we always come early to Sunday School when the students come late?" She said, "It is good to be first." Bob replied, "No mom, the Word of God says that the last shall be first and the first shall be last." 

Laughter is medicine...take some!

WHEN OTHERS WEATHER A **STORM**

WINNIE LaFRANCE-CHAMBERS


I used to work at an office that would lose power every time there was a thunderstorm. This was one of my *least* favorite jobs so I found myself hoping every day for some heavy rain. I was so focused on myself and how I could benefit from the situation that I didn't think about the effects the storm had on everyone else around me. If the office lost power, work couldn't get done. It sounded great to me, but my "busy work" was pretty important to our clients. If our paperwork wasn't completed on time it would cause complications for others and even postpone future services. In addition to our office losing power were the homes surrounding the area. People were unable to do things in their place of residence, and businesses would have to temporarily shut down, which resulted in a loss of potential earnings. For the longest time I didn't care. I couldn't understand why my coworkers would try to take their work to the closest window for some natural light or check the weather on their phones to see when the storm may pass. I thought they were just showing off! When I heard the thunder, I would get my purse and wait in the

darkness for dismissal so I could bolt out of the door without anyone trying to stop me.

I bring this up to say that in life we can get so caught up in ourselves that we fail to see or acknowledge when our peers are weathering a



storm. It's important to take a look around and see what you can do to help someone and NEVER hope for something that can be detrimental to their well-being. The Bible says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:3-4, NIV), and "Do to others as you would have them do to

you" (Luke 6:31, NIV). How would you feel if someone else was hoping daily for something that would affect you negatively? Even if your intentions are indirect, it is important to see deeper past your own feelings. Hopefully this article gives you something to think about the next time you want to complain about having to complete a task that affects others. Take some time to look at the bigger picture. 

STORM CALMER

CAROLYN FLEMING, RN



When I think of the word “storm” in the Bible, the first thing that comes to mind is Jesus stilling the storm in Luke’s Gospel. Jesus “rebuked the wind and the raging water: and they ceased, and there was a calm” (Luke 8:24). In a natural sense, water can calm storms in our earthly bodies. Hydration helps everything run smoothly; dehydration can lead to all sorts of breakdowns in bodily processes. Our bodies are made up of about 60 percent water, and hydration is key to helping all of our organs work efficiently. Here are some symptoms to watch out for that could mean dehydration.

You feel hungry when you are not

Sometimes people confuse dehydration for hunger. Try drinking a glass of water before and after a meal. It will help you fill up and allow you to be satisfied, but not stuffed

You feel tired and distracted

Blood delivers oxygen to our body organs and when that is challenged by dehydration it can cause sluggishness of our mind and body.

Constipation

An imbalance of fluids can cause a major backup in our digestive system. We think of an increase in fiber to eliminate constipation, but we need water to work with the fiber to flush the toxins out of our bodies.

Skin irritation

Lack of water in skin can cause flakiness, itchiness, dullness, and may lead to breakouts.


Increased risk for heart attack

Dehydration constricts your blood vessels, making your blood thicker; therefore your heart has to work harder to pump blood through the body.

Increased chance of bladder, kidney, or urinary tract infections

The kidneys work to regulate the body’s water balance and also flush out waste from the bloodstream. An adequate amount of water is needed for the body’s natural filtration system to work properly.

The recommended amount of daily water intake is about 64oz. The best way to obtain this amount is good old plain water, but there are some other ways to obtain that amount. Soups, fruits and vegetables, drinks that contain water such as a coffee, tea, milk, 100% fruit juice, and sports drinks can be used. Just be careful that you are not consuming an unhealthy amount of caffeine, sugar and calories.

If you are experiencing some mild symptoms such as feeling tired, dizzy, or hungry, try drinking some water and see if the symptoms go away. Let’s see if water can help our body systems stay in balance, while we rely on Jesus Christ to calm our storms and keep it all together for us. 

THE LIBRARIAN'S DESK


DESIREE COLLINS

Why? Why Me? Why My Family?

I'm sure we have all said these words or thought these thoughts. But, why not you? And why not your family? Trouble, suffering and adversity are painful. Nowhere does the Bible teach that Christians are exempt from the troubles of this world. In fact the Scriptures say categorically, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, NIV).

When adversities arise it is never a surprise to our God, He knows exactly what you are facing. But better than that, He is orchestrating our adversities for His Glory and our benefit, according to His good will! "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20, KJV).

No one enjoys suffering, but God uses hardships to mold believers into the people He intends them to be. Adversities have a cleansing affect intended to purify us and guide us back to Him and wholeness. Often times the difficulties we experience are not intended exclusively for us. The Lord uses hardship to equip us to serve others with compassion and to ensure our testimony is credible and authentic. But most importantly, God promises

us a path through any trial we face. In Jesus Christ problems are an opportunity to draw closer and grow spiritually. As you wait on the Lord, the Holy Spirit will bring forth what is needed in your life as the Lord leads and directs you. In fact, God promises great blessings to those that stay faithful and persevere through hard times. "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those that love him" (James 1:12, NIV). 

Recommended Books:



REJOICE

...a storm is coming!

FAMILY FOCUS
CRYSTAL A. HOOD

I was recently watching an action movie in which the heroine was constantly in peril. She was continually running, jumping and dodging life threatening situations. Although the things she faced were extreme I feel there are times when I can relate. Our family life sometimes seems to have one tragic or challenging dilemma after another, and there doesn't always seem to be an end or relief coming. How do we stand in life when life feels like a tsunami after an earthquake?

God recently led me to read the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament. In this book God repeatedly declares who He is. He reminds us that He is the only God, The First and The Last and there is none like Him. Why does He tell us this over and over? He wants us to know and believe Him. When we come to know God it helps us to stand with God. Standing with God increases our faith and belief in Him. Then we will respond to our storms like King Hezekiah and pray.

The king of Assyria wrote a letter taunting King Hezekiah. He wrote, *"Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, 'Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria...Did the gods of those nations which my fathers have destroyed deliver them....'"* (Isaiah

37:10-13 NASB). This greatly distressed King Hezekiah. He went to God's house and laid the letter before the Lord.

He prayed, *"O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to all the words of Sennacherib, who sent them to reproach the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated all the countries and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, LORD, are God"* (Isaiah 37:16-20 NASB).

This is an amazing prayer and it is exactly what God would have us to do. What King Hezekiah faced was very real and troubling. This situation impacted his family and kingdom, but he did not seek advice from people. He went to God. He knew Him personally, which is why he was able to say, "Lord, look and hear what this man has the nerve to say about you."



Satan repeatedly postures at us and attempts to convince us that we will be destroyed, that we are alone, and that God has no power. His various attacks can wear on us and disrupt family relationships. They can cause us to have spiritual doubts and stumble greatly, but God knows us. He states that He knew us before we were formed in our mother's womb (Jeremiah 1:5). He asked and told Isaiah, *"Do you not know? Have you not*

helps us to stand and rebuke Satan in the name of Jesus for the lies he attempts to put in our life. God said to Isaiah, "Even from eternity I am He, And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it" (Isaiah 43:13 NASB)?

Experiencing God through our difficulties increases our knowledge and understanding of Him. As our relationship with God grows, the Holy

*[Satan's] various attacks
can wear on us and
disrupt family
relationships*

Crystal A. Hood

heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power" (Isaiah 40:28-31).

When we know God, seek Him in prayer, and wait on Him it causes us to face life's storms and not to be overwhelmed by them. His Spirit

Spirit is able to work in our life. He motivates us to rejoice through our trials and helps us to become a walking testimony of God's greatness. *"You are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me" (Isaiah 43:10 NASB).*



ARMAH & CYNTHIA
GETTING TO KNOW
MINISTER LINWOOD **CHILDS**

Gray



When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrow like sea billows roll, whatever my lot Thou hath taught me to say, it is well it is well with my soul. It is the soul that so often takes the brunt of a storm. But Jesus spoke to the storm like He does to a man; at the perfect time, He commanded it to be still. I was privileged to speak with Armah and Cynthia Gray about weathering the storms of life.

Linwood Childs (LC): How do you weather storms?

Armah Gray (AG): When I you look to the military, why is it that a private is willing to die when the general is in back? Because they know that that general is willing to take his rifle and go to the front. The soldiers know that. The captains and lieutenants are able to manage with they know this, so the general can lead them. We have a great example, the greatest, Jesus of Nazareth.

Looking at the human dimensions, in the middle of turmoil, I asked God for peace which God gave me. His peace allowed me to think. I began with His peace but I began to rely on my thinking and analytical mind. So when things got worse, of course I thought, “What did someone else do that messed things up?”

Cynthia Gray (CG): For a while I lived with

my great aunt in Philadelphia. She put me in school, Catholic school. This reminded me of what Pastor mentioned in a message, about how Catholic school indoctrinates their students. Being the only child in my block that went to the Catholic school, of course I stood out. There are movies that show a kid having to run home from school, well that was me every day. I had to get pass the bullies to get home. I did not tarry.

Of course, you have those days that the public schools were closed but the catholic schools were open. On those days, all day long I was thinking, how am I going to get to pass these kids to get home? So I would put all my things together so that when I reached the last corner, I was ready to take off, so by the time they realized I was pass them it was too late. I think that is why even today I’ll say to Armah, “Let’s put whatever we’re carrying all together before we reach our front door.” I think it comes from that.

There always was something about going to Catholic schools that didn’t ring true to me. This whole thing about going to confessional. I was just a kid. What are my sins? You do kid’s stuff. Every week you have to do confessional. So of course I’d run out of stuff to say! So I started making up stuff! I had to do this; we would take time out of school and go to confessional. When I really didn’t have anything to say, I just made up stuff. “Yeah,

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*F*rom
the beginning
you can
know God's
direction
for your
life

Armah Gray





um, I told a lie yesterday”. We actually went into the confessional box and spoke to the priest. You know you said the Hail Mary and the Rosary.

But in my mind, when I got into trouble, for instance one time I took my aunt’s watch. I don’t know why, but she was looking for it. “Oh Lord, what am I going to do?” Something said give it back. Of course I’m going to get into trouble, but something said, “Give it back and confess.” So that taught me that I don’t have to go through this priest to talk to God. It was always something that was with me. So when I went a back to my mom who was a staunch Baptist, I didn’t have any trouble falling in with their service. They were praising God and singing and I said to myself, “I like this.” I then knew, at age 10, that I could talk to God myself. I also knew that He was with me and had my back. I didn’t understand all the dynamics, but I knew He was with me and there was something more.

AG: I enjoy listening to her story each time I hear her say it. My father was an Anglican and my mother was a Baptist. I too started in a Catholic school. My mother then put me into a Pentecostal school. But on Sunday’s we still went to Catholic church. I laugh about this still, but my uncle was a Muslim, but religiously read the Bible, the Koran and the Jewish scriptures, the Torah. All three.

When I was a bit older I asked him. He said he was a Muslim, but he read the Bible and Torah just in case. He didn’t want to miss God. He read all three books. Comically, his name was Daniel, so he could read all three books and found his name in each. That was his way of making sure. But from the beginning you can know God’s direction for your life. My grandmother had an *[outdoor]* kitchen.

LC: “The word kitchen is derived from the Latin word ‘coquina’ meaning to cook. Cooking was earlier done outside thereby giving the kitchen space an infinite space area. As time advanced, households built a separate building for the kitchen because of the consciousness of fire burning down their houses
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308172307_Design_Considerations_And_User-Satisfaction_In_Kitchens_For_Nigerian_Homes [accessed Apr 23 2018]. Armah’s grandparents were Muslims. He recalls a particular visit when he was but a child...

AG: When I would visit my grandparents, I would see the kids all carrying writing tablets. I was really young and didn’t really know what it was used for, but I knew I wanted one. I really wanted one. So, on one visit to my grandparents, I convince the Imam to give me a tablet.



LC: An Imam is a local prayer leader in a Mosque, who also organizes the weekly Friday prayer services and sermons.

AG: Well of course they noticed that I had one. So I took it to my grandmother who was in their kitchen. Well she was furious. She took that tablet and grabbed me and took me to my grandfather. She said, “You see what your Imam gave my grandson? His father is a Christian why give him a tablet?” My grandfather being a Muslim, called the Imam and told him, “You should never, ever give any of my grandchildren anything from the Mosque. Their parents will determine where they go.” So here you have two Muslim grandparents fighting for me to walk as a Christian. I was 6 or 7 years old at the time. I went to a Pentecostal school, had a Baptist mom, and an Episcopalian father.

LC: I interjected that Armah should be a [religious] professor.

AG: But it was enriching. As an adult when I went into a Protestant church I felt at home. I think all these things prepare one to face crises and challenges in life.

LC: I know this is a painfully obvious question, but do you ever feel unprepared for crises?

CG: Yeah! We always say that God his preparing me for something I cannot handle right now. But when it does come you’re saying, “Oh Lord!” Later on you realize that He had prepared you to go through. But when you begin to go through things you, you can tell that something is going to happen. But it knocked me for a loop and then, BAM, what just happened? Whoa, what am I going to do?

But it was prayer, especially from the saints, that helped me, helped us, go through. Never asking me what’s going on, but telling me God has something great for you! Even though they did not know the specifics, because of what God had already done earlier in my life, I took it as Bible to me. I knew that I had to give it all to Him; I had to open myself up to God, raw! I understood what they meant in the Old Testament when they said they rent their clothes before the Lord. You have to pull it all off and stand naked before God. Let Him usher what He wants to usher into your life. The things we go through often have little to do with the actual situation itself, but what it is that God wants us to know, what He wants to put in us. Pastor and others would say, “Keep praying, keep praying.” People would just come up to me and tell me this.

LC: Cindy is a confessed private person, but she readily states the following...

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CG: I am now much more ready to listen and talk to help people. You just never know what people are going through. I work in the Maryland Comptroller's Office collecting taxes. When people call they're in trouble. So I listen, but tell people the truth. Sometimes it's the office staff and sometimes it's the callers. I tell some of them, "If you believe God then act like it. Don't talk defeat." One man said he was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. After listening to him for a while knowing he was Christian, I gave him the Scriptures and told him to stop talking destruction. Healing is yours already. When they ask my opinion about people being gay, I talk plainly. Don't ask if you don't want the truth. You know which direction I'm heading. The Bible says it's an abomination. I think

a lot of people feel that way they just are afraid to say it.

AG: While I was studying evolutionary biology at Howard University, I thank God for Father Edwards, who told me that God is the greatest evolutionist. It takes a million years, but God can do it in a second! God is the greatest evolutionist. God did it in one second. I was studying evolutionary biology and I was struggling, it was challenging my faith. What *do I* believe?

As a college student I was pretty much sheltered, and now I decided to grow a pair of wings and do whatever I wanted to do. But my mother used to always tell us that morning prayers fortifies you through the day. She said challenging

I then knew, at age ten, I could talk to God myself

Cynthia Gray





yourself in God's Word on a daily basis, even 5 minutes, will go a long way. Every Saturday morning through college, no matter what I did Monday through Friday, I read my Bible on Saturday morning. One Saturday morning after a crazy night of camping, I was on top of a mountain. As I sat there to read my Bible, something in me said look down at the valley. It was like someone had sat there and sculptured the rolling valley. While I was contemplating this I looked down to read my bible and it was already turned to the section where God created the earth and gave us dominion over it. Then I thought, evolution and it recalled what Father Edwards had said to me, God is the greatest evolutionist for He did it all in a mere second!

It was a challenge for me. Do I continue to believe or not?! Up to that point in college things coasted, but evolutionary biology made me struggle. It was difficult to take an exam or write a paper. What do write? Do I really believe what I'm putting on that paper? So God challenges us.

LC: Armah recounted a memorable event that marked a trend that God was persistently engraving into his spirit...

AG: I was walking into a friend's office and after the business was conducted an Assembly of God

minister who, in attendance, asked if he could talk to me. I said sure. He said softly, "Go home. God doesn't need you here, He needs you at home." I had never seen this man in my life. I replied, this is my home. He responded, "No, this is not your home. Go home." I had never, met this man.

LC: A similar incident occurred that deepened his realization that God seeks room in our lives...

AG: I was tutoring a minister's daughter in math, while in college. The minister said to me, "Don't waste your time going to medical school. You'll do something else, you'll be happier doing something else." Now I had spent three years preparing to go to medical school and said quietly, "I'm going to go to medical school. I don't care what this minister said." She said, "No, you're not going to go to medical school." When the time came for me to make a decision I said, "No. I'm not interested in medical school." I took gross anatomy at Georgetown University in the summertime. They had a program where they randomly picked three students to continue to medical school. I realized there that I was not interested, especially not interested in working from 6am to midnight. This was not for me. I say this because God directed key people to me at critical times. I did not seek them out at all. I have learned over the years to listen to
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listen to the Holy Spirit. He sends people often to confirm what's in your spirit.

LC: How do you avoid mishandling the challenges?

CG: You have to learn who to talk to! Learn when to be quiet. Even your closest friends may believe that they have your best interest at heart. That's what *they* believe, just like Job's friends. They really believed that they had his best interest at heart. But they can pull you in a different direction than what God wants; often because they are angry about the situation themselves. Psalms 46:10 (KJV) comes to mind, "Be still, and know that I am God". The Lord would put it in my spirit that I did not need to tell this to this person or that person. If they believe God, they won't bother you about it, but they will pray. God will put the right people there to stand with you and you don't have to say much. Especially if you stay in your Word. God's Word designs very different scenarios. I resigned myself to whatever His will is. I don't often have a reason or explanation, other than the Word has convicted me and I'm going to follow His Word. Just pray. It's being in tune with Him and listening. When we're not in crises we don't mind God. We don't really listen. We say, "Oh, I got this! I can do this by myself I don't need you Lord (LOL)! You just can just stay on that shelf until I need you again!"

LC: You mean to tell me that you listen a lot better when you're going through?

AG: I can tell you, that you really don't know what a person is going through. The situation may be identical, and you still don't know what another person is going through.

LC: Situation after situation the Grays described how God, providentially, sent prayer warriors to them. Calling them to stretch themselves even more in God's direction.

AG: This one brother told me that he could not tell me what to do, but if we prayed then God would. He asked for no details, let's pray. He prayed for me right there.

LC: The presence of God brings out capacity that we often don't want brought out, because its associated with a cross. We argue with God on which cross we will carry. We are rather sure we need a lighter cross. We just don't appreciate what God can do inside of a person. Any person. What is the most difficult thing about going through?

CG: The time table! From start to finish...when is this thing going to be over?!



AG: You want it to be over yesterday.

CG: Lord you said you're going to do it, what's taking so long?

LC: How do you get through it?

AG: God gives us peace to get through. Peace allows you to think. Part of the educational experience involves learning that there are processes to things. So when crises come, I learn that there is a process to go through. Well, God brought me through this, and this, and this. What is the relationship between this and this? And, of course, that's where we get lost because the human mind takes over. My training and how I was raised has a lot to do about how I approach crises. Nothing ever fazed my mother. After she prayed about things she just moved on. My father was the same way. He was a college professor and was a little more introspective. He prayed about it, and said God brought it for a reason. He will find a way for you to go through it. I labored through that process trying to make spiritual sense out of things *and* secular sense out of it, like when will this be over?

CG: We are always looking for a ram in the bush. We're looking to see it right now. But if we

remember that ram was already in the bush before Abraham was looking for it. The answer is already there. It's just when will I partake of that answer. But what I find is that what I call distractions come during your time of crises. Often comes as a ministry opportunity to get your mind off of what you're going through. It refocuses your mind.

AG: I went overseas to work, to help my family's business and lands. A Christian organization asked me if I could lead a delegation to India. I said okay. Then they said, "By the way, could you stop in Pakistan on your way, you could also go to Bangladesh and Singapore!" So, my focus was on these people, who have never traveled before. Everyone in my group was a Christian and I'm taking them into areas that are predominately non-Christian. So, of course I'm asking and wondering how I'm going to get them through. This trip turned into three months. Finally, I'm done. I'm in Dubai waiting to come back and I get an email asking me once I get to Monrovia to help a person coming from India to get to Bogota, Columbia. In my mind I'm asking why with all the bombing and drug fighting going on there, why do you want *me* to go there! It seems to be God's way of saying, "Stop thinking about it, I've got it under control. Go do something else!" I learned that there are people all over the world struggling to make a
(Continued on Page 17)



living. Predominately women and children, often in abusive situations. So I got caught up in thinking about those people and God took my mind off of what I was going through.

LC: Armah was contacted by a human rights organization to help third world and developing people know their rights. He reflects on his privileged upbringing...



AG: When I thought about how blessed I was growing up in Liberia, my biggest problem as a teenager was how many pairs of sneakers I needed. But all of a sudden you go to places where a family gets \$5 dollars and they have food for a month! It gives you a different perspective. So I kept telling

myself I'd do it for a little longer. God put me in that position to stop me from driving myself crazy because I'm the type of person that would keep trying to come up with a different scenario to resolve my problems.

LC: Favorite scripture?

AG: No matter whatever else I open my Bible to read, I read Psalm 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." That word *present* stands out, not next week or in the future, but always is. Long time ago, I tied my wagon to His wagon. I was driving up to Pennsylvania and was getting very weary. So I pulled off the road and thought I was too tired to go on. While I pulled off the road two ladies flagged me asking for direction east to Philadelphia. As I was helping them we got talking about things and it turned into a half hour conversation. I found out that one of their daughters was an overseas missionary. After talking with them I was so revived until I was fully able to make it back home. He is our present help.

LC: God wants to be a part of every part of our lives. I asked Armah: "I recall that you had a



medical challenge with your throat. Can you share any part of that?"

AG: Certainly! I actually know the day of my healing. But whatever happened to me going into the future was immaterial to me. I know what day I was healed.

CG: One Sunday morning before service I asked Sister Elliott to pray for my husband's upcoming surgery. At the time we didn't know it was cancer. She agreed.

AG: When I found out it was cancer I sat in my car and for about 5 minutes I cried. Then I said, "Okay God, we have a challenge. Lord my healing is not of concern, I know You will heal me. I'm not concerned about the way You want to do it, that's up to You. Just one thing Lord, I just don't want to be in pain." My wife will tell you, I was in excruciating pain as I struggled to talk.

CG: I remind you, he *really* likes to talk! Trying to keep him quiet was also a challenge.

AG: So that Sunday morning, Cindy didn't tell me that she asked Sister Elliott to pray for me. My father's influence on me was that you pray for yourself in private. So that was still a strong part of

me. I did not want to put the spotlight on myself even for prayer. So when I was asked to come up for prayer I didn't think it was me. They had to ask twice. As I went I noticed my time on my watch. It was 1:16pm May the 6th, 2006. She laid her hands on my throat and prayed. I have not felt any pain since then. They stop putting me to sleep to have surgery. They just numbed me. No pain. I asked God to take the pain away. Healing was not of any concern to me. The pain is what I asked God to take away. He did.

Later when it recurred, I told Sister Elliott it will be fine. It helps to have a believing surgeon. Two year later when it came back, I used to go back for routine checks and for clean-up, usually a half an hour. This time we had this two and half hour struggle. He couldn't get anything out. He was really distraught until he just walked out the office. He returned in 5 minutes stopped the procedure and said, "Let's ask for grace. I've never lost a patient to this before. But I have to stop, if I do anything more I will kill your vocal cords and you won't be able to talk. Let's pray for grace. Let's come back in six weeks after the swelling has gone down and see what God presents to us." I told Sister Elliott. Now I have never allowed anyone to lay hands on me in my life, except for my mother and Sister Elliott. But when she did there was no reluctance from me.

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CG: When we returned in 6 weeks the staff was ready for this 2-hour struggle again. They inserted the scope and the doctor starts getting excited. We were wondering what's going on. He just looked at me and said, "There's nothing there!" So, he put up the pictures from the 6 weeks earlier and put them side by side with the current one. It was gone! It was an unbelievable struggle at the last visit. It almost leads you to believe that God did not want the surgeon to touch it, that God was going to take

a different path. There was nothing there!

Although Armah was handling this healing process in stride the rest of the family had to work through it. Mom kept it together for the rest of the family as I confessed faith. But when I was alone, I was on my face before God and in the Word.

AG: This experience also was transformational for me also. Because I constantly labored under the pressure of being my father's son.

LC: Armah's father was a gifted and renown college professor in the field of linguistics. He also worked for the Liberian government in human development, and traveled the world over.

AG: When people who knew him would meet me, they would invariably say, "I hope you're as brilliant as your dad." Ugh! I sometimes wanted to tell them to talk to my three brothers who could read an entire textbook and in a half an hour tell you all about it. It would take me three days. They were blessed with an amazing ability to learn, but me, not so much. Pressure was always there to measure up. It wasn't until a 50-year-old man asked me my name. I told him, and his reply was, "You are not your father."

LC: Humility is precious at every station of life. The Bible says that God gives gifts severally in the



"...my biggest problem as a teenager was how many pairs of sneakers I needed."

ARMAH GRAY



body according to the will of God. Armah quietly and persistently uses his gifts in the biomedical engineering field, hardly a mentally anemic field of study. Additionally, he has been paid to travel, for humanitarian purposes, to 15 countries and 47 U.S. states. No, he is not his father, but he does represent Our Father.

Cynthia, from a child, when she experienced her mother's spontaneous Baptist worship service, has had her gift of singing awakened. But now these many years, is seasoned with what a gift alone cannot bestow, a weathered soul and a tried faith.

AG: I asked my father when I was little if I could walk with him on his early morning walks. He would leave at 5am and return at 6:30am. For that entire time he did not talk to me, he prayed and sang to God. I didn't understand it then. But he sang, the hymn that has become my

favorite as well: I can hear my Savior calling, come and follow, follow, follow me.

CG: There is not one favorite song I have. But the one the Holy Spirit used when He fell upon me as a child in my mother's church, the senior choir sang and its so memorable: "Hold to His Hand". The Spirit fell, I knew I was home, and all I wanted to do was get on the choir.

LC: How do you feel about storms now?

AG & CG: It was necessary.

LC: Psalm 46:10! 



It is important to have an appointed time and place to meet God daily. That's where miracles will happen. Time with God is also our time to fight battles in prayer. If we want to overcome the storms in our lives and experience the peace that God promised, there are three ways to respond in the spirit:

Respond by applying scripture to our situations:

Jesus fought satan with the written Word. When satan tried to persuade Jesus to come over to his side he hit Jesus in His vulnerable spot—hunger. Jesus had been fasting for 40 days. Having been before God for 40 days He was full of the spirit and responded to satan using scripture (that is the first way to fight). Jesus said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4, KJV).

Remind God what His Word says about our situations:

One of the greatest things about prayer is that in prayer we can hold God to His word. A good example of a believer approaching God in prayer is the prayer of the prophet Daniel in Daniel 9:1-9. He confessed the sins of his people and called on God to remember His covenant with Israel and end His their humiliation in exile from Jerusalem. Daniel prayed God's own words back to

LET US PRAY

ANGELA HUNT BONITTO

Him and asked
Him to honor
those words.



Tear down demonic strongholds

surrounding our situations:

2 Corinthians 10:4 writes the weapons of war are not weapons of this world. Our prayer weapons have divine power to demolish strongholds. Strongholds are things that keep us oppressed, like wayward children, alcohol, drugs, impure thoughts, premarital sex, the list goes on and on. The important thing to understand is God knows about our strongholds and He knows how to take them. When we go into our prayer closet or prayer space we must be willing to fight

Let Us Pray: Test us, O Lord, and try us by examining our hearts and mind. Show us areas in our life that we have not fully surrendered to you. Forgive us of compromise. Give us courage to pull down every stronghold within us without reluctance. Thank You, Lord, for forgiving us and cleansing us from all sins and breaking every curse against us on the cross. By the power of the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus, we bind satan's influence that reinforced compromise and sin in us.

In Jesus name, Amen.



MANY AFFLICTIONS


TAYLOR LANDRUM

God uses every aspect of life to talk to His people, and oftentimes I find God's voice in the little things of life – many of them seemingly unrelated to my Christian walk. One of these is an expression from the Nationwide commercial: "Life comes at you fast." Those words couldn't be more true. Life doesn't usually give you an elaborate warning before it's about to dump a load of trouble on you, and trouble typically comes in loads.

As a Christian, the devil is working overtime to create adverse situations and strife in our lives, because knowing that we are the Lord's, he seeks to have us even more. Psalm 34:19 says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous man." The Bible itself tells us that life is going to give us problems, and that by living for Christ, we may be afflicted by more problems even than our secular human counterparts. Personally, I have problems all of the time, and it seems like they have a very particular tendency to compound on each other. First I can't find my keys in the morning, then I'm late leaving the house, then I'm in additional traffic on the way to work, and the next thing you know I've missed the train and I'm late for work. It makes you want to scream and curse everything, but therein lies the test.

God calls us to not give in to that urge to despair, and instead to keep our eyes focused on Him. Faith without works is dead, and God calls us to put the faith that we have into action, particularly in times of trouble. It is easy to have faith, or at least say that you have faith, when everything in your life is going the way you want. It's a lot tougher to

maintain faith when things have gone against you. The natural urge, especially as a Christian, is to blame God. We feel that because we are covered by His grace that nothing bad can happen to us, but not so. God does not say that our lives will be without trial, but rather that He will give us the strength to overcome any of the trials that are placed in our path. God places trials in our path so that He can glory over our triumph, and that is only possible by having faith in Him during those times. The devil will tempt us, but God is glorified when we resist that temptation and overcome. Coincidentally, when we exercise our faith, God is faithful in return, rewarding us for doing so and ensuring that we will triumph over whatever comes against us.

Psalm 34:19 does not end with the phrase "many are the afflictions of the righteous man", but concludes with, "the Lord delivers him from all of them." God will reward our faith by delivering us from our hardships if we can maintain focus on Him despite the outward appearance of things. God calls us to remember Him and His words, and to hold fast onto His promises. If God has promised that He will deliver you, He will deliver you! The key to weathering storms in life is not by preparing for them in any natural sense, or even going above and beyond to prevent them from happening. God teaches us that no matter what we do, trouble will come. Yet, God will be there to deliver us from every trouble that does come if we are able to be like Paul in the dungeons who, despite his captivity, never lost faith in the power and goodness of God, and was ultimately freed by an Angel of the Lord. 

Have You Considered Job?

FEATURED **ARTICLE**
KIM ODOMS-BOLDEN



If it were not for the lengthy persecution of Job by his friends, the book of Job in the Bible would be, by far, my favorite story ever written about a man and his stamina to stand in the midst of a trial and what some would call the storm of a lifetime. Much to my surprise when I did a word search on the word “storm” in the NIV Bible, the book of Job has the most referenced scriptures in a single book, referenced to a single individual. I was not surprised by the frequency of the word associated with Job, but more so how his trial was very closely related to the word “storm”.

In Job 9:17 Job talks about being “crushed with a storm.” How God’s “thunder announces a storm” (Job 36:33) describes how he is driven “before the wind” and tossed “about in the storm” (Job 30:22). Twice the “Lord spoke to Job out of the storm” (Job 38:1 and 40:6, NIV). In life there will be storms, a violent disturbance in the atmosphere. Something that moves forcefully and decisively to a specified position. In the storms there will be winds, a natural movement of unrestrained air. Often storms are accompanied by thunder, a loud rumbling, crashing noise after a lightening flash due to an expansion of heat.

Surely, Job losing all his children, his finances, most of his servants and being cursed by his wife is a violent disturbance in the atmosphere. This storm in Job’s life was forceful and specifically targeted toward him. The heat expanded causing a loud rumbling upsetting Job’s norm. In the natural sense winds are an unrestrained force. Yet, Job’s supernatural storm, the wind that tossed him, was far from unrestrained.

While sailing, a windstorm came upon Jesus and His disciples, and the boat they were in was filled with water. The disciples went to Jesus, and woke Him, saying, “Master, master, we perish.”

Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging water; they ceased, and there was a calm. The disciples were in awe and stated, “What manner of man is this! For He commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him” (Luke 8:23-25, NIV).

Job was described as blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He was considered the greatest man among all the people of the East. Yet, his storm was not merely unrestrained—it was deliberate. During his storm (trial), Job did as God projected. Job refused, even in his dismay and ignorance, held to what he knew and believed. In the midst of the storm, the turbulence, disorder, and utter shock Job held his ground on the solid rock which he stood and stated the he know his redeemer redeemer lives.

What do you do when you are faced with storms? How do you “weather,” withstand a difficulty or danger, survive, come through, or overcome a storm or trial in your life? The book of Job serves as a proverbial framework or road map for when those who are called by the name of Jesus to reference and mirror when faced with life’s storms. Jesus stated, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, NIV). “The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials” (2 Peter 2:9, NIV).

If the wind and the waves obey Him, then every trial, every storm, every tempest MUST submit to the Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God spoke the world into existence. Let God speak to you “out” of your storm as He did for Job. ***Don’t weather the storm, storm the weather with JESUS!!!***





ON THE INSIDE COVERS

Inside Front: Congregant Lateshia Darby pauses for a picture as she donned her beautiful attire during Sunday service as CCC recognized Black History Month on February 25, 2018

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2018

Inside Back: Church member Marie Hood stands in reverence as prayer is given as the offering is lifted during service on April 9, 2018

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2018

COLUMBIA COMMUNITY CHURCH

8516 Thomas Williams Way
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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

EVERY SUNDAY:

10:00 AM Church School (All Ages)
11:00 AM Meditation & Prayer
11:15 AM Morning Worship

COMMUNION SERVICE:

1st Sunday of Every Month

EVERY WEDNESDAY:

Noon-Day Prayer 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Noon-Day Bible Study 12:00 PM - 01:00 PM
Evening Prayer 07:30 PM - 08:00 PM
Evening Bible Study 08:00 PM - 09:00 PM

1st & 3rd WEDNESDAYS:

Youth Bible Study 07:00 PM - 08:00 PM

GENERAL INFORMATION

CARE & COMFORT MINISTRY

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Church Website: www.columbiaccmd.org

CHURCH LIBRARY

Open Every Sunday 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM and after service until 2:00 PM