theENCOURAGERmagazine





ON THE COVER

Congregant Phyllis Baker takes a moment to flash her pearly whites during her photoshoot at Columbia Mall on August 12, 2018.

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GLORIFYINGGOD

he subject of this brief meditation is "Glorifying God". The question explored here is exactly what glorifies God and what role, if any, does a believer play in it? The truth is that the believer is one of the major sources of glorifying

God, i.e. bringing glory to God.

The 15th chapter of John is one of the most revealing in the New Testament when speaking about the glory of God. In it, John speaks of the relationship that

exists between Christ and the believer. He reveals that the true believer is connected to the life of God in the same sense that a branch on a tree gets it life from the connection it has with the vine. John also reveals that God is interested in having one hundred percent of the believer. God is not just satisfied that the believer is bearing some fruit; He wants the believer to bear more fruit. So He purges the believer that he may bring forth more fruit.

Further, John tells us that this fruit bearing connection between the believer and Christ greatly benefits the believer's prayer life. "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you."

Note that the focus in the early verses of John is on the blessings that flow into the believer's life as a result of being connected to God. Then He

> sums up His discourse by saying that God is glorified when the believer walks in these blessings,

shown in His creation, the crown jewel of which is man. However, sin robbed man of the glory God originally

God's glory is

bestowed upon him. The new birth restores the seed of the original glory through the believer's connection to the new Adam - Christ. After the new birth everything God does with and through the believer, based on the victory of Calvary, is to restore more of that original glory. This restoration not only blesses man but also glorifies God, because God glorifies Himself through His people.

Therefore, to glorify God is to give yourself completely to God. The more we allow ourselves to be conformed to the likeness of God, the more we glorify God. God is glorified through His people.



THELIBRARIAN'S DESK

What Is The Chief Purpose of Man?

imply put, the chief purpose of man is to glorify God...end of discussion! The Bible makes it abundantly clear that God created man and that God created man for His glory (Isaiah 43:7). If we could get a hold of those words in the essence of our being, we could turn our lives around 360 degrees. We glorify God when our words and actions line up with God's words and actions. Govern our thought life and behavior by first asking, "Does this glorify God? Does what I am thinking and doing demonstrate God's perfect attributes, moral excellence and infinite love?" Modeling the character of Jesus is a way to glorify God.

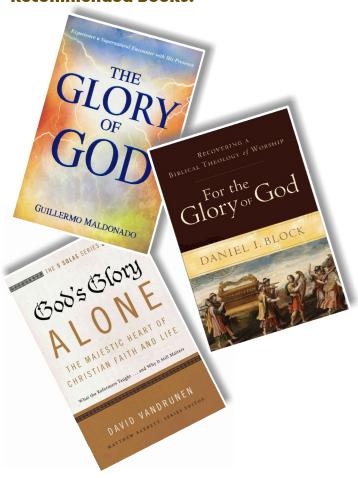
Glorifying God is to acknowledge and recognize God as our creator, and to praise and worship Him for creating us in His likeness.

Because God created us in His image our purpose cannot be fulfilled apart from God. God loves us so much, that we when make His glory the purpose of our everyday life, we help to sustain a growing relationship with the creator. David writes in Psalm 8:4-6 NIV, "what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made

them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet".

When we honor God we demonstrate the high regard we have for our Heavenly Father. God's glory is the essence of His nature. We acknowledge that essence by acknowledging His greatness by praise, worship, obedience and holiness. Live so as to glorify God (1Corinthians 10:31).

Recommended Books:



CHRISTIAN COMEDYCORNER CAROLYNJACKSON COLUNDUM AR

REMEMBER "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine"

Proverbs 17:22 (KJV)

Submitted by Collin Dunlap:

One Sunday, Andre and his grandma went to her church. The church was full of older people. Andre asked, "Why did you bring me to this church, Grandma? It's full of older people, where are the younger people?" She told him to be quiet and sit down, kids are meant to be seen and not heard. Even though the church was filled with older people, those people were getting it in like a younger person and glorifying God. The older people were glorifying God so much that one woman almost lost her wig. Andre picked up his phone and began filming. Grandma immediately told Andre, "Didn't I tell you to sit down and be quiet?" Andre responded, "I want to be ready when the woman's wig comes off, so I am sitting down and quietly filming."



Submitted by Carolyn Jackson:

When a Woman Asks, "What?"

...it's not because she didn't hear you. She's giving you a chance to change what you just said!

One Liners

Old age is coming at a really bad time. When I was a child I thought "Nap Time" was a punishment. Now, as a grownup, it feels like a mini vacation.

Only in This World

...do drugstores make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions. ...do they have drive-up ATM machines with

Braille lettering.

WALKING THE WALK WINNIEL OF RANCE-CHAMBERS

used to always ask my mother what she wanted for Mother's Day, thinking it would be something I could pick up at the store. Sometimes she would justaskfora small objectso I could be satisfied, but her true answer was always along the lines of "be a good person" or "be a positive example for others."

While I was thinking about what to write about this topic, I started with a few lines about, prayer, church, and reading the Bible (all very important things) but I heard my mother's voice in my head stressing the importance of lifestyle and walking the walk. We are all creations of God and as we profess Christianity, there are eyes on us that are looking to see if the way we live matches whatGod says. This is a big part of glorifying God! Not being perfect (because that is impossible), but doing our best to live in a way that is pleasing to God. Think about your everyday life and the opportunities that you have to show the world who God is and what He has done in your life.

Things to think about:

How can I glorify God while on the job?

By having a positive attitude and working to the best of your ability.

How can I glorify God while I am out

with my friends?

By reflecting on His word and how it has impacted your life.





TEMPLE**MAINTENANCE**

"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;"

- Colossians 3:23, KJV -

lorifying God requires full commitment to Him. This requires a strong work ethic, even when the task is difficult. Proper treatment of our bodies is part of this. For most of us the process of getting healthy and staying healthy is easier said than done. It requires a daily commitment to our goal and a lot of help from God. Just like in other areas of our lives, we mess up sometimes, but we don't give up. If we begin to keep 3 major areas in balance, we are on our way to a healthier lifestyle.

NUTRITION

An adequate amount of B vitamins has been linked to brain health as we age. We are at a greater risk for B12 deficiency and may need supplements if we are not getting enough through the foods we eat.

Make sure you have enough high quality proteins in your diet. These include meat, fish, milk, dairy products and eggs.

Maintain a healthy digestive system. Regularity of bowel function with no excessive diarrhea, constipation, or gas is important Nutritional needs change as we age. Metabolism slows down and we burn fewer calories, so there may be a need to decrease calorie intake and increase physical activity.

LIFESTYLE

Consider the consequences of "bad" and "good" habits. An example:

Bad habit: You start each day with a breakfast of 2 donuts.

Good habit: Replace the donuts with something like fruit, Greek yogurt or some other nutritious alternative.

It will take patience and preparation to change the habit, but ultimately the "good" habit will leave you healthier and happier.



FITNESS

Make exercise a part of your daily routine. Regular exercise helps increase energy levels, relieves stress, manages weight, and prevents disease. You may use home equipment, a fitness center, or daily walks around the neighborhood. Prayer, music or a motivational audio book are all good exercise buddies.

Healthy Joints – Joint pain can interfere with physical activity, but sometimes as your fitness level increases, joint pain may decrease. *Be sure to check with your physician before starting any new fitness regimen.*

If you find it difficult to add a 30 minute workout to your day, there are some small, easy things you can do to add some steps to your daily activities.

Park a little further away from your destination.

Use stairs if you are only 1-2 floors away.

Get up and change channels

instead of using the remote.

Get up periodically if you sit at a desk a lot, and take a walk around the office or outside if it is possible for you to do so.

The Spirit of God dwells in our temple. Though not always an easy task to maintain our temple, with God's help and approaching each day as a new beginning we can make it.



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o make much use of profound truth, requires sustained review and applied effort in the face of all kinds of oppositions and delays. This is one of the purposes of King Solomon's inspired biblical Hebrew poetry, "to everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven...a time to plant and a time reap." Spiritual growth. What comes overnight can vanish overnight. On many levels this is true and the weight of this is truth is hard to overstate. Words are much more easily spoken than they are to live the principles they convey. To this end, hear the testimony of Phyllis Baker.

I grew up regularly attending church, Sunday school and Vacation Bible School; this was a normal part of what my family did. My sister and I sung in the "Sunbeam" choir I could read well and, when old enough, we joined my oldest brother in the Junior Choir at First Trinity AME Church, Norfolk, VA. Time would allow me to see my two younger brothers follow suit, whether joining the choir or serving on the Usher Board.

My earliest memory of believing in the power of prayer occurred before the age of 9, when a pet parakeet fell off of its perch and we were awakened by the bird's panic. Though I wanted my Dad to take the bird to the vet, it became clear that he wasn't going to do that. As the years passed, my father occasionally told the story of that night to

friends and family, admitting that he didn't think twice about carrying the bird to the vet because he only paid \$0.25 for it. He elaborated that, in the midst of the problem, "Phyllis said, 'Pray Sharon pray!'" I remember that very well; thus, it is my first memory of recognizing the power of prayer. In other words, I determined if daddy was not going to take the bird to the doctor, we had no choice but to pray for the bird. We had two parakeets: a healthy one and the one that fell from the perch and needed prayer. Though it fell a few more times, and eventually was unable to fly; it outlived the other that was well and very active!

What would prove to be more compelling to me, pertaining to my faith and belief in God, occurred in my junior year in High School. In those years, my Great Aunt Gerlie battled cancer. When it spread throughout her body and doctors advised there was no more they could do for her, she was released from the hospital. My family lived across the street from her. With that proximity, she and I had a very close relationship. During that winter of 1978, my sister and I visited my aunt as she was confined to a hospital bed within her home. Being aware that snow was on the ground and the hanging icicles, she asked us to go back out and bring some snow in. We grabbed a bowl from her kitchen and carried out her request.

(Continued on Page 11)

never, ever let go of knowing

THE

who gives me
strength
to endure
any situation

Phyllis Baker







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I can still picture her fingers moving in and around the snow-filled bowl, just enjoying the feel of the winter precipitation. On my father's birthday, in February, my dad was called to come to Aunt Gerlie's home as there had been a change and thus, a belief that her time on earth was short. I chose to go with him and I sat by my aunt's bedside until it was evident that she had made her transition. There was nothing shocking about it. I noticed that the sound of her breathing had ceased and therefore, determined (without the nurse confirming) that she was no longer with us. Her Home Going Service was held on a sunny day of a cold February, yet at her gravesite, it began to snow. I do not recall any clouds in the sky, but I know upon our short drive home the sun was shining. The snow falling over her gravesite was a clear sign to me that she was fine, and that experience has been forever etched in my mind.

During the same school year, I tried out to be a contestant in the first Miss Oscar F. Smith High School Pageant. During the interview process, I was asked if I believed in God and why. I shared the experience that I had with my Aunt, which triggered tears as it had been so recent. I was later selected to be a contestant. Even though I wasn't crowned as the winner, I was very proud of my participation as it allowed me to challenge myself and to grow a little more out of the quiet,

shy person I was comfortable being. It also made me realize that I would rather *judge* a pageant than to be *in* one and my chosen career path would allow that opportunity in more ways than one.

Upon graduating High School, I knew I wanted to attend college although not far from home, narrowing my choices to Hampton University (then known as Hampton Institute) or Virginia Commonwealth University. Upon acceptance I matriculated at Hampton University declaring a Political Science major, but changed it to Sociology at the start of my freshman year. I made the change just in case I would decide not to pursue a career in law. Fortunately, I recognized my career path during my first year of college when a United States Probation Officer (USPO)/Eastern District of VA spoke to my Introduction to Criminal Justice class about his work as a USPO. He described the variety of the work, requiring him to "wear many different hats" in interacting with the court, with the community and of course with the federal law offenders, whom he supervised. It was then I knew it was the type of work suitable for me, as nothing about it sounded mundane. In 1983 I received my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology (with an emphasis in Criminal Justice), and furthered my education at Virginia Commonwealth University where I obtained a Master's of Science Degree in Sociology.



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My 31-year career commenced in 1985 as a Probation Officer for the Commonwealth of Virginia/Adult Community Corrections in Portsmouth, Virginia. This was the stepping stone in preparation for work on the federal level as the training I received provided a solid foundation for the rest of my career. I was fortunate to have a supervisor who readily answered all of my questions; that is, until I completed the formal training for new officers in Waynesboro, VA. Subsequent to the training, when I asked a question, his typical response was, "Did you look it up in the manual?" Thus, he taught me to utilize the available resource(s) and to work independently. I recall receiving a report back for correction and cross-checking inquiring as to why I had prepared the case the way I did. After being convinced that I was right, I took the report back, with the manual in hand, and upon our review and discussion, my supervisor agreed that I had applied the guidelines correctly. It was a good feeling and an example of the student truly learning from the teacher. Throughout my career, I remained respectful to those in authority and maintained humbleness, even when challenged.

During the time I worked in Virginia, I lived at home with my parents and continued to sing in the home church choir. I was totally caught off guard one evening when dad returned home

from a church meeting and said, guess who was nominated and voted on to be a Trustee? Without hesitation, I said "Mom"; he laughed and said it was me. "WHAT?" quickly entered my mind, as I immediately said, "I don't know what to do!" Nevertheless, I embraced the opportunity and learned all I could about the duties of the position.

This represented the second time, I would really experience growth because someone else saw something in me that I didn't see. The first time occurred before my sophomore year of high school when two upper class students convinced me to try out for cheerleader. Being a cheerleader was not on my list of things to do since cartwheels, tumbling and splits were not my forte. Even so I nonchalantly, at least in my mind, went through the mere motions of learning, knowing I could quit at any time. However, their enthusiasm and commitment to my success kept my attention. On the day of tryouts, I decided to give it my all. Connecting with the energy and excitement in the gym that day, I surprisingly managed to do a split, a feat I would not repeat for the next three years of cheerleading practice! I was and still am grateful for the experience that took me out of my comfort zone; however, I didn't love the sport enough to carry it into college.

In October 1989, the career goal I set during my freshman year of college was realized when I (Continued on Page 13)



was hired as a United States Probation Officer for the District of Columbia (USPO/DC). I embraced my career as my genuine interest allowed me to be receptive to learning and understanding the intricacies of the work. Fortunately, those in supervisory positions ensured that I was kept challenged. I was assigned a Drug Aftercare Caseload consisting of high risk offenders due to their history of drug use. After a couple of years, the office branched in separate units; I volunteered to work exclusively in the Pre-Sentence Investigation (PSI) Unit. Once there I was occasionally afforded the opportunity to prepare an assignment routinely designated to those promoted to the "Specialist" position, though not actually in that designation. Additionally, I was assigned to

assist new officers in their cross-training by having them observe my pre-sentence interviews and attend sentencing hearings with me. In 1991, I came across a 30-day Temporary Tour of Duty (TDY) opportunity to assist the U.S. Parole Commission (USPC). This required me to supervise parole cases, I had constant contact with the parole commission and learned to respect their overriding decisions they made in the cases I supervised. I was intrigued with the opportunity to observe the USPC firsthand. The Chief Probation Officer (CUSPO) approved my participation and I was blessed to be selected. Thus, like my State experience, my professional experience in DC was invaluable.

I was truly thankful that the Lord spared me that experience

Phyllis Baker





What I could *not* anticipate was the "Crabs in a Barrel" environment that was present among my professional peers. Consequently, I established very few genuine friendships and observed my comfort zone only behind closed office doors. Outside of my office, I smiled and greeted all with whom I came in contact, including one person in particular, who routinely failed to acknowledge my simple "hello". Fortunately, I never, ever let go of knowing THE ONE who gives me strength to endure any situation. My long-term go to favorite scripture was established before ever leaving home: Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (NKJV). Today, I chalk the experience up to growing and realizing that some people will choose to dislike you even without getting to know you. I re-established what was taught in my upbringing and found encouragement and peace worshipping at Saint Mark AME Church, Oxon Hill, MD. I also had a love for baking and decorating cakes (a hobby that my previous employer documented in an evaluation submitted to the USPO/DC). Subsequent to baking a cake for the Courthouse Christmas Party, requests for cakes transferred into a second job for me. It was a blessing because I would get so consumed in preparing the cakes, any negativity around me disappeared for as long as I was focused on providing the cakes. Ten years or more passed

before I would reflect back on the years at the USPO/DC (1989 - 1993) and realize how something as simple as cake baking was a mental escape for me. Thankfully, when I started my career in DC, my mentor suggested that I not remain in the District long-term. Indeed, after two years, I knew I would move on. I attempted to do so in 1991, when I applied and interviewed for a Hearing Examiner position with the USPC. You see, the Temporary Tour of Duty, TDY, experience provided me with a new vision and career goal, to one day work as a Hearing Examiner for the United State Parole Commission. I did not know the opportunity would come so quickly, yet I knew it was a long-shot to be offered the position with only two years of federal law enforcement experience. Thus, I was not discouraged when I wasn't offered the position. The best opportunity came about in September 1993, when I was hired by the Eastern District of North Carolina as a USPO (PSI Unit) in Raleigh. I accepted and would remain in North Carolina until October 2002.

The change was very favorable. Staff was located in six offices through the district and my immediate co-workers in Raleigh were both welcoming and friendly; and, I received the same response upon meeting those off-site. The cost of living allowed me to attain a personal goal of purchasing my first home in May 1995. I met (Continued on Page 15)



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friendly, helpful neighbors, and had a long-time college friend nearby in Durham. I appreciated the slower lifestyle and it was refreshing not to hear a consistent counting of homicides in the city on the local news. Because of my Washington, DC experience, when Raleigh had its first car-jacking case, I was assigned to prepare the report for the court. Following the sentencing, the Chief USPO came to my office and extended a compliment from the sentencing Judge who had contacted him about my work on the case. Specifically, the Judge said "she knows what she's doing". I would learn, from this conversation, that this particular Judge was viewed as one difficult to please. Yes, things were going well in North Carolina, yet unexpected challenges were on the horizon.

The first challenge came to light in 1996, after I saw a posting from the USPC seeking assistance via another 30-day TDY (NOTE: Parole was abolished in the federal system via The Sentencing Reform Act of 1984; thus, the USPC had greatly reduced in staff while the final dismantling took place). Once again, this opportunity caught my attention (as it had in 1991). As required, I initiated a request to participate in the 30-day training, awaiting with the Chief USPO's approval. The Chief referred the decision to my Supervisor, who presented no opposition. Nevertheless, the Chief did not readily accept my

immediate Supervisor's decision and required me to put in writing what my duties would be, asking how it would help the agency, etc. I complied and incorporated input from a representative at the USPC. After two weeks without a decision, I followed up with the Chief, who then asked that I put in writing what work of the District would I perform while at the USPC (in my head, I was thinking "None"). I sought input from a fellow USPO/PSI unit, with my same supervisor, who had completed a 60 or 90-day TDY at the U.S. Sentencing Commission earlier in the year. It had not surprised me when he shared that he had not been required to write up anything nor do any work for the agency while at the Sentencing Commission -- just what I thought. I knew how I perceived this and thus, thought long and hard about the discrepancy and what, if anything, I should do. I had been observant and co-workers had freely shared experiences about training opportunities not being publically available to all and certain staff were handpicked for special trainings, giving them an advantage when promotional positions became available. I contemplated the words of my former Washington, DC Chief, who said "Choose our battles carefully!" Based on the information I had, I chose this "battle" and handled it very discreetly. In the end, staff (unknown to me) who had previously requested training and been denied were first offered the opportunity. The Chief not only



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called me into his office and asked if I was "still interested" in the TDY (for which I never lost interest), he also committed the District to pay for my expenses while at the USPC. I recall at least two months had passed from the time I requested participation in the TDY until he offered it to me as if it was his idea. Actually, I knew if he had provided me with a definitive answer, within a reasonable time, and a clear explanation as to why it would not be a good time for me to be away from the office (for 30 days), I likely would not have challenged it. However, in hindsight, it worked out the way it needed to. As the action I took benefited more than just me and it clearly was the right time to dismantle an unfair status quo practice.

I would take the same steps again despite feeling targeted by a newly appointed assistant supervisor, who was critical of my writing skills and use, or lack of use, of punctuation. What I viewed as insignificant, I appeased by making the modification. However, I pushed back on eliminating the use of case law to support my work when responding to attorneys' objections to the application of guidelines in the Presentence Report. I was confident in my work and in my understanding of the guidelines, so to diminish my reports, by not giving the sentencing Judge the best information for their use, I would not do. After tiring of the unpredictable battling and feeling

overworked and underappreciated, I requested transfer from the PSI Unit to the Supervision Unit in 2000. The request was granted; I also transferred from the Raleigh Office to the satellite office in Wilson, a far more relaxed atmosphere, with no more than 6 staff members. By September 2001, a promotional position was posted (in the PSI unit), and for a fourth time, I competed. Four of us applied and were interviewed soon after the 9/11 attack; thus, I had a different view about the importance of this limited process in the midst of the very BIG picture of what our country had experienced. I also believed that I didn't have one fan on the 3-person interview panel. Nevertheless, I knew I was qualified and prepared to perform specialized work involving cyber-crime, juvenile offenders and conducting training. I was the most senior with 12 years of federal work experience; two others (well qualified) had 11 and 10 years, respectively. The apparent "long-shot" with 6 years of federal work experience was selected for the position. This outcome confirmed that my growth in this division in NC would not continue; I felt stagnant, both professionally and personally, yet truly still believing that something better was out there for me.

Proverbs 3: 5-6, NKJV resonated throughout the career challenges: "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own (Continued on Page 17)*

understanding; In all your ways acknowledged Him, and He shall direct your paths."

It was very important that I stayed spiritually balanced, and did so while in North Carolina, worshipping routinely at St. John AME

Church in Raleigh until 1996, when the aftermath of Hurricane Fran brought the Todd family into my life. Though I grew up experiencing hurricanes this was different because I was now living alone, and this powerful hurricane raged throughout the night, keeping me awake. Fortunately, I knew a friend (in DC) and my oldest brother (in VA) would answer my late night or early morning urgent call and offer comfort during the storm if needed. The morning after

helplessly viewed the devastation. I was surrounded by couples and families when one said, "You should have come over here with us, instead of staying alone". As I looked around it was very clear that I was safer in my own home as the homes on each side of me, directly across the street, and behind me had at least one fallen tree on the house. I was truly thankful that the Lord spared me that experience. The city sent Griffin Todd (owner of a grading and hauling company) into the neighborhood to remove trees from blocking door entrances and off of cars. Though I had neither, a large Oak tree had broken ground and appeared (to me) that it would fall and hit my home any minute based on the continuing strong winds. After taking care of the urgent matters, Griffin and his brother, Gilbert, cut down the tree resting on my front yard. They refused payment and asked that I visit their church instead. I did just that, and the warm, friendly, family-based congregation inspired me to return again and again to Zebulon First Baptist Church, Zebulon, NC; eventually joining that church's Spiritual Voices choir. While there I established life-long friendships, returning occasionally to worship with them, the last being in November 2017. It really felt like I was leaving family when I left NC in October 2002. Though they wanted me to stay, they lifted me in prayer for receipt of the career opportunity I wanted.

the storm, I ventured out to join neighbors as we



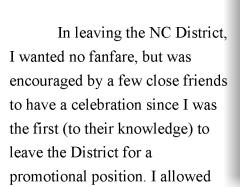
I kept my eye on postings, anticipating another opportunity would present itself to become a Hearing Examiner (akin to an Administrative Court Judge) with the USPC. I also maintained communication with a few staff members at the agency who knew of my interest. When an opportunity presented itself in 1997; I applied and was not offered an interview (imagine my surprise since I had interviewed 6 years earlier). Though I was a little offended, deep down I wasn't ready to leave the home I had been enjoying for less than 2 years at that time. I later learned the Commission needed staff who were familiar with the DC Board of Parole Guidelines as the USPC inherited jurisdiction of the DC Parole Board cases when that agency was abolished. Patience and time allowed for another opportunity to present itself in February 2002 (my father's birthday month). I applied, and was offered an interview in May (mom's birthday month). These months meant something to me. Not only was I was more ready for a change, but I also was in very good spirits, celebrating two very important people in my life at the same time these events were forming. I believed it was my time and though I had not missed living in the DC area, I knew I would return for this specific opportunity. As I went through the application process and interview, the words to a popular song by Yolanda Adams, "Never Give Up", played over and over in

my head. I stayed encouraged throughout the entire process. Subsequent to the interview, I focused on a different song: "I'm Gonna Be Ready", also by Yolanda Adams. I knew I had done my part and I placed the whole outcome in God's Hands; nevertheless, knowing I was ready to make the move, I knew it had to be His will for me. If you know how government functions, it would be a slow process and this change, for me, would be from the Judiciary to the Department of Justice.

Simultaneously, I was spearheading a musical program, on behalf of the Spiritual Voices, to raise funds to replace the sound system in the church. I grew up seeing the Virginia Choral Ensemble (Richmond, VA) perform and this was the group I targeted to come to Zebulon First Baptist Church to headline the program, which was held in July 2002. It was favorably received and the funds raised by canvassing local businesses provided the means to purchase the sound system. I would not be residing in NC when the sound system was installed; for in August 2002, I was offered the position of Hearing Examiner for the U.S. Parole Commission with a starting salary as a GS-14. This was true *blessing* on top of <u>the</u> blessing -- as the personnel officer in Raleigh told me that she had <u>never</u> seen anyone skip a grade. I had no idea that would occur either, all I could say is I know the God I serve.

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the planning and ensured it would be a small gathering. I knew the occasion came with an expectation for me to share parting words and I drew a blank as I contemplated what I would say. I wanted to leave as jovial as possible because I could not hide the joy I was feeling by moving on. As there had been meaningful songs, that carried me through the first nine months of 2002, a parting song eventually came to mind, "I Won't Complain" (lyrics by Bishop William Abney). It perfectly summed up my time in NC parole district.

I returned to the DC/Maryland area in October 2002 to work with the U.S. Parole Commission as a Hearing Examiner. There's no perfect work place, yet this was my best fit as there was balance. The training was organized and spanned close to three months. I was one of six people hired and camaraderie was established among us early on. Maybe it had something to do with the experiences we brought with us and the fact that all but one of us were over the age of 40. After three years, I developed more confidence in



the position. By August 2011, I was promoted to Deputy Case Operations Administrator. I had a vision as to how things could run more orderly and was encouraged to

implement changes. It was a rewarding experience at the USPC and though it was (is) an abolished agency, I knew it would still be in operation until I was ready to retire. That milestone was reached on October 29, 2016, after 27 years of Federal Law Enforcement service, I retired. I left after I believed I had given it my all.

Over the course of my career and beyond, what has been of great benefit to me is the simple *practice* of Luke 6:31 and Matthew 7:12, "So in everything do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." I'm still learning more and more from the teaching and preaching of Pastor Elliott and today, I prevent myself from speaking the word "can't" as I know it ushers in defeat. I am mindful that God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy: 1-7). I have humbly shared with others what I have because I learned to give and have tested Malachi 3:10 and I know that giving must be done not from the hand but from the heart (2 Corinthians 9:7)!

In His Presence FAMILY FOCUS CRYSTAL A HOOD

he Bible tells us that God's glory fills the entire universe (Psalm 148:6). Although this is true we are unable to be in His glory fully. When Moses asked God to see His face He replied, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live" (Exodus 33:20 NASB). If we are unable to see God's face how will we be able to reside with Him in heaven?

God has made a way for us to experience His glory here on Earth as a means for us to get to know Him and prepare us to be with Him in heaven.

From the beginning He made the existence of His glory apparent for all to see if they chose to look. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20 NASB).

God gives us a glimpse into His glory as a means to help us see our own sinful state. When God gave Isaiah a vision of His glory in heaven Isaiah said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:9 NASB).

When we confess that we are sinners and accept Jesus as Savior we are saved. We are cleansed from our sins and the glory of God, through the Holy Spirit, comes and dwells in us (Acts 2:38). It is due to the glory of God in us that we are able to glorify Him (John 4:24). Our testimony of Jesus glorifies God and lights the way for others, especially our family, to come to know Him. Peter tells us to "... sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the

hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15, NASB). According to the prophet Jeremiah, God's Word in our heart burns as a fire shut up in our bones when we don't share it as God would have us to (Jeremiah 20:9).

Through the working of the Holy Spirit in us we become a new creature spiritually. Experiencing God's glory in us changes how we act and how we think (2 Corinthians 5:17). Saul pursued and persecuted Christians. Then he encountered the risen Jesus and he was transformed. Jesus gave him a new name, Paul (Acts 9:1-7). Paul came to refer to himself as an apostle, servant/bondservant or prisoner of Jesus Christ. He professed that all of his extensive education was dung compared to the knowledge of the Lord (Philippians 3:8). The Holy Spirit was able to use him to write almost all of the epistles in the New Testament.

The spiritual transformation through our acceptance of Jesus as our Savior is the key to us seeing God's face and being with Him. Since we have received salvation our names are now written in the book of life (Luke 10:20, Revelation 20:15). Also, "..our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Philippians 3:20-21, NIV).

Revelation 21:22-27, KJV is the final piece that God has laid out for us. Through Jesus we will receive a glorified body. It is in this new body that we will be able to be with God in heaven. We will live in the fullness of God's glory and His glory will be our light. This is our testimony; it is the joy and the hope of our calling.

WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

hristian life is a tough task, no doubt about it. We currently live in a world that seemingly attempts to remove God from every facet of life and persecute those who seek to bring Him into it. I've always heard that the "world is getting worse," and, in fact, it is. But, as far as I am able to tell, it's always been bad. Of course there are a plethora of wonderful aspects of life, and for Christians, we have the Bible's words to encourage and remind us that despite the trials we face, all things work together for good to them that love the Lord (Romans 8:28). In spite of the fact that the vast majority of people around us are so blinded by the wiles of the adversary that they think God is a fairy tale, we know that God is alive and working.

The truth is, Christians have faced persecution from the beginning of time – even before Jesus came to Earth the Saints of the Old Testament faced trials and adversity. In comparison to some of the violent tragedies of the past, it wouldn't be far-fetched to say that modern day Christians have it easier in many respects. At the very least, we don't fear for our physical safety on a daily basis for the most part. Still, sometimes when I sit and think about life, I find myself discouraged by the state of the world that we live in. Politicians pass laws and give speeches that are so secular and deceitful that I wonder how anyone – Christian or otherwise – can't see through it.

Musicians publish songs with lyrics and messages that couldn't be described as anything but demonic. People in positions of power all around the world strive for personal gain through force and deception. To the Christian eye, these are "signs of the times", and indeed they are.

Unfortunately, even more subtle are the tools that satan disguises... tools that only a trained Christian eye might perceive. Human beings are naturally inclined to believe that they can solve their own problems, we are taught from birth to learn to be self-sufficient. It is instilled in us to learn to earn our way in this world; we are taught that through hard work and perseverance we can and will succeed. When people reach a place in life where they are able to effect change, they believe that they have made it to that position based on their own merit, and that their skills of diplomacy, reasoning, and logic will allow them to make choices that better the world around them. What is missing from all of this is God – the founder of the world in the first place. One of satan's most potent weapons is his ability to shift human trust from God to man. He wants us to believe that we are capable of solving our own problems, and that in turn, we don't need God. He wants us to believe that our human logic has "served us well so far", and that we know enough to make decisions without the help of God. We turn to technology,

licensed professionals, and seemingly every tool of

the human mind before we turn to God.

Ask yourself, when was the last time you heard someone with real political or social power turn to God? Personally, I can't remember a time someone in a position of power other than a pastor or evangelical has even mentioned God's ability to influence the lives of men. I feel that often when Christian's refer to Glorifying God,

they mean praising God in church, or thanking Him for the endless blessings He has bestowed upon them. These are two critical aspects of Christian life, and there is no such thing as doing "enough" of either of them. God is great, and worthy to be praised. His blessings in my life personally are so many that I could never count them. But, glorifying God is more than just thanking Him and praising Him for what He has already done in our lives. Glorifying God is trusting Him, and believing that not only does He have the power to order our steps

moving forward, but that He has the desire to do so.



Don't be fooled by satan's idea that man is the God of his own life. God is the God of every life, whether the individual acknowledges Him or not. Even more importantly, God cares about each of us, and He wants to be glorified in the present as well as for what He has already done. There is a reason God was so pleased when Solomon asked Him for wisdom -Solomon knew that God

was the ultimate authority, and that by trusting in Him he could advance far further than he ever could have on his own.

Glorify God by letting him reign in your life and if we, as Christian's, pronounce His power and ability, His blessings will multiply. Glorifying God is praising Him for what He has done in our lives, but it is more than that too. Glorifying God is acknowledging his ultimate power, and putting our total faith – publicly and privately – in Him rather than ourselves.

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In the Garden FEATUREDARTICLE KIMODOMS-BOLDEN

he current environment, the existence of wickedness, and the escalation of radical evil may leave some to wonder, but that should not be the case for Christians. The fall of man, Adam and Eve's disobedience writhes throughout the world and is as prevalent and relevant today as it was thousands of years ago. God described the serpentas "more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made." Satan is a created being. In Genesis 3:1-13, NIV, "He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die!" Lying to self makes it easier to lie to others. "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when vou eat from it vour eves will be opened, and vou will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." Having read this many times I was enamored by new revelations. There is no known record that Adam created before Eve, was ever tempted to disobey God by the serpent until he became a married man. Marriage, one man and one woman, is God's Holy covenant and the only one mad about it is the devil. After their disobedience, "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" God called to the man first. He later spoke to Eve but there is no reference that God even considered speaking to the serpent about his actions until God administered the consequences of all their actions. The man, "He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked?" When making decisions the source should always be considered. "Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?' God said nothing about commanding they not touch the tree. The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Be careful of what others try to give, pass on to you. Especially, that which is "not" of God. The word "no" is available for use. Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Disobedience dishonors God. Knowing their disobedience shined a light on their guilt and shame but it also revealed, through the opening of their eyes, how finite they were in comparing themselves to an infinite God. "And theLord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of *us*, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever". Us? God stated, "the man has become one of us." Would that be the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? "Lest he...take also the tree of life." Was this a tree that was also forbidden or was it allowed before the tasting of the forbidden fruit and living "forever" was given a "cease and desist" order because of the entry of sin into humanity? Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken" (Genesis 3:22-23, KJV).

Now, all people sin and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). It is God alone who rescues us "from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers [us] through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:24–25, NIV)! This was a very close resemblance to satan's fall, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground..." (Isaiah 14:12, KJV). Is this the same ground Adam would till? "For thou [satan] hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14). Didn't the serpent promise Adam and Eve in their disobedience they would be like God? In fact through their disobedience they became more like satan. Obedience is the key that blocks such consequences and unlocks the blessings of the Lord. Adam and Eve rejected God's will to pursue their own will. Their eyes were opened but it was not their awareness that caused them harm, it was their actions. Eve described the fruit as good, pleasing and desirable. No matter what it looks like, sin that appears pleasing, good, and desirable is insatiable. Disobedience to God, unbridled pleasure, and life without boundaries leads to a life of destruction and the wages are death. Hence, how and why the world has arrived to where it is today. An eternal life separate from God wreaks havoc in the lives of those who choose satan's schemes over God's protective plan. So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, "do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31, NIV). No need for Christians to wonder or wander. Give God His glory for He is Worthy!!!



COLUMBIA COMMUNITY CHURCH

8516 Thomas Williams Way P.O. Box 2292 Columbia, MD 21045

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

EVERY SUNDAY:

10:00 AM Church School (All Ages)11:00 AM Meditation & Prayer11:15 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

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

GENERAL INFORMATION

CARE & COMFORT MINISTRY

Sis. Linda M. Byrd: 410-313-9673 / Sis. Donna Givhan / 410-997-3276 columbiamdcareandcomfort@gmail.com

CHURCH CONTACTS

Phone: 410-465-7040 / Fax: 410-465-0943 Church Website: www.columbiaccmd.org

CHURCH LIBRARY

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