



ON THE COVER

Congregant John Hawkins is as Christ-centered as he is debonnaire during his October 31, 2018 photo shoot at CCC.

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2018

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THE MAGAZINESTAFF

PASTORS

Rev. Reginald L. Elliott, Pastor Juanita Elliott, Assistant Pastor Greg Landrum, Assistant & Youth Pastor

FDITOR

Michael R. Spry

GRAPHIC DESIGN & PRINTING

Michael R. Spry T/A Gadgets & Garments of Praise mjspry@comcast.net

WRITERS

Min. Linwood Childs **Desiree Collins** Collin Dunlap Pastor Juanita Elliott Pastor Reginald L. Elliott Carolyn Fleming, RN Crystal Hood Carolyn Jackson Betty W. King, PhD Winnie LaFrance-Chambers Min. Greg Landrum Taylor Landrum Brenda Manokey Min. Michael Manokey Kim Odoms-Bolden Earl Slacum Michael Spry

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Please Call or Visit Us: 8516 Thomas Williams Way Columbia, MD 21045 410 / 465 - 7040

On The Web: www.columbiaccmd.org

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BEENCOURAGED

he Christian journey is not one that is trouble free. Hindrances, obstacles, disappointments and trouble abound. However, we must not start feeling sorry for ourselves for we are not the only ones facing such. The Bible mentions many of God's servants who reached points in their journeys where it seemed that all hope was gone. In

such circumstances it is
easy to become discouraged
and wonder where God is.
The temptation is to throw
away faith, particularly
when you have been
striving to follow God with
all your heart and all you

seem to get is trouble. In such times you need to be encouraged.

Paul, writing to the Galatians, addressed such circumstances and gave them instructions on how to not be overcome by disappointment. Notice he addressed the issue of sowing and reaping just before the verse cited above, because it is in that area of life that disappointment tends to raise its ugly head. While no one wants to reap anything that is not good, oftentimes we are not really surprised when we do because we have opened the door to it by our own actions. Such trouble is invited.

However, there is such a thing as uninvited trouble. We do not reap what we have sown,

trouble comes as a surprise. That is when encouragement is really needed to keep doing good. This is the area of greatest temptation to the committed Christian, to keep doing good when you do not seem to be rewarded for doing good. In such cases, the temptation is to become weary and give up.

To anyone experiencing such a time in their life, the Scripture speaks, "and let us not be weary in well doing: for we shall reap, if we faint not." Scripture is telling us that the encouragement we need is rooted in our faith.

We must believe that we will reap, that we will eventually be rewarded based on what we have sown. The key is we must believe, and that belief must not be in ourselves. We must believe in the faithfulness of God. We cannot reward ourselves, we must believe that the God we serve will keep His word and reward us according to what we have obediently sown. To avoid fainting and giving up, to encourage ourselves to continue, we must believe that God is a faithful rewarder. In the end, our faith in the faithfulness of God is the greatest encouragement we could ever receive. So encourage yourself by believing in the faithfulness of God. The God of all the universe will do right. Be encouraged.



MINDFULHOLIDAY EATING CAROLYNFLEMING, RN

Be encouraged! The holidays do not have to mean weight gain. You can still enjoy your favorite foods, but in moderation. It's about being mindful, not mindless about what you eat.

MINDLESS EATING IS:

Consuming food just because it's there **Eating** while watching TV, working on a computer, or texting on a cell phone **Eating** for emotional comfort, not hunger

MINDFUL EATING IS:

Controlling portions – holiday celebrations increase opportunities to eat yummy snacks and desserts. Eat smaller portions and less often. **Eating** when you are hungry – don't eat just because the food is there, but also don't wait until you are famished. That creates the opportunity to overeat

Planning some healthy snacks – high fiber snacks keep you feeling full longer as one example **Slowing Down** – enjoying each bite. Drink between bites. That gives your brain time to trigger that you are satisfied.

Paying Attention – when you eat in front of the TV, computer, or talk on the phone, you are more likely to lose track of how much you have eaten.

Using Technology – if you are tech savvy, there are apps that manage food choices and track

what you eat.

Instead of being sad about what you can't eat, celebrate the delicious foods that you can eat. Food will always be a major focus between holidays, but let us not forget **THE** major focus of the holidays: thank You Jesus for another year to be thankful, and thank You Jesus for Your birth.

BE ENCOURAGED that you can make it through the holiday season Healthy, Mindful, and not 10 lbs heavier!





THELIBRARIAN'S DESK DESIREE COLLINS

STAY THE COURSE

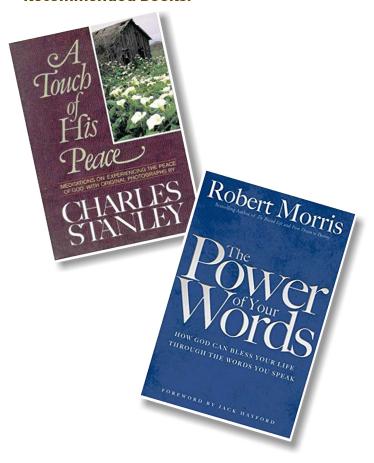
God says, Thank Me and Trust Me in the midst of the crucible. Know that nothing is too hard for God.

Wouldn't it be nice to live a care free life? Sit back and just "chill", guess what -- not in this world! In this world you will have trouble, count on it, expect it! Do not seek security in this world. Remember we have an eternity of problem-free living reserved for us in Heaven. Rejoice in that inheritance! "For our light momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18 NIV). So consider it all joy when trouble comes.

Our God is sovereign, and is above all our earthly troubles. In this ever changing "crazy" world we live in today, the struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the powers of this dark world and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm (Ephesians 5:12). We are literally caught in the cross fires of a "spiritual" battle. But... Sweet Jesus has given a promise--the promise of the Holy Spirit who will give us peace, comfort and joy in the midst of a storm. God is not a man, He cannot lie. It is this promise that gives hope.



Recommended Books:



FEATURED ARTICLE

Armored with Hope, Equipped with a Future

I shall mourn not, nor weep
God has commanded me
To put on the helmet of salvation
Pray on all occasions
Wear the belt of truth around my waist
With the breastplate of righteousness in place
I'll fit my feet with readiness from the
gospel of peace
And take up the shield of faith with purposeful ease
To extinguish the evil one's arrows
Dividing asunder joints and marrow
I will take up the sword of the Spirit
Far from amiss
The sword is God's living Word
Unadulterated and empowered

Alert, mighty in power
I will not cower
Fearlessly,
I'll make known the gospel's mysteries

Hold my peace
Be not sorry
Or grieved
Nor wain in vain
For the joy of the Lord is my strength

I shall not mourn or weep
God has commanded me
To eat the fat, and drink the sweet
Against the wiles of the devil I will stand
Aligned with God's masterplan
I am blessed with a hope and a future
I will more than endure
For what God has prepared for me
Eye hath not seen
Nor ear heard
Some may think it absurd
Some may never fully understand
How it has not entered into the heart of man
The things which God hath prepared for them
That love Him

Equipped with the full armor upon me
Encouraged need I be
Far beyond what I can see
Deeply embedded within me
Encouraged I will be
So shall it be

Scripture References:

1 Corinthians 2:9 Ephesians 6:13-19 Nehemiah 8:10 Jeremiah 29:11 Hebrews 4:12

CHRISTIAN COMEDY CORNER CAROLYN JACKSON

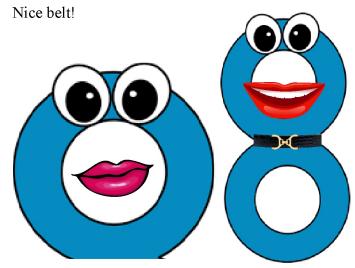
"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine"

Proverbs 17:22 (KJV)

Each day Jermaine wakes up to his alarm, but goes back to sleep. His mother is tired of him being late, so she offers some "encouragement." On Monday she resets the alarm to ring every 10 minutes. On Tuesday she pulls his blankets off as the alarm sounds. On Wednesday as the alarm sounds, and the blanket comes off, she pours drips of water on his face. On Thursday Jermaine's mother goes all the way, no alarm, no blanket, and no dripping water. She applies encouragement with a belt! On Friday when the mother goes in the room, Jermaine is awake and sitting on the side of the bed fully dressed. Shocked, his mother asked "what happened?" Jermaine answers, "Lord knows I've had enough "encouragement" for one week!



What did the number "0" say to the number "8"?



I now cook using the 4 food groups...Canned, Boxed, Bagged and Frozen.

I'm encouraged because when I woke up this morning there were no wrinkles in sight. The house was spotless. The garden looked lovely. And my grumpy hubby looked like Denzel Washington. I don't think I'll ever put my glasses on again.

Hiring Manager: Wages are \$12.00 an hour. After six months, that goes up to \$18. When can you start?



page07 theENCOURAGERmagazine William Upper FAMILY FOCUS

hen Jesus was attempting to prepare His disciples for His coming death He said to them, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1, NASB). How do we do this? The increase in intense natural

disasters that has affected the world has placed many in a constant state of uncertainty. Fear of the unknown or what will happen next hovers like a heavy weight ready to fall on us. How do we encourage ourselves and simply believe God?

When I was twelve years old I went away for a week to a summer camp in West Virginia. It was at this camp

that I received Jesus as my Savior. When I returned home I didn't want to lose the feeling and connection to God that I had experienced at camp. Early in the morning I would often go to the playground and sit on the swings watching the sun rise. I would sing praise songs, write poems and rejoice in God's presence.

One thing God taught me during this time is the importance of keeping Him close to my heart.

When I was first saved I was not involved in a youth group nor did I have Christian friends. What I did have was Jesus and His presence which was very real to me. It was during this time in God's presence that He taught me and embedded His

spirit in my heart. I often reflect on the memory of this experience and testify about it. Holding on to the reality of it has kept me grounded in Christ through the years.

The wonderful thing about God is that what He did for me is not unique. God does this for everyone. It is just a matter of whether it is received or remembered.

One of my favorite passages in the Bible is Luke 2:13-20. In this passage the shepherds have experienced the heavenly host of angels singing and telling of the birth of Christ. The shepherds decided to go and see the Child that had been proclaimed to them. When they came to the manger they told Mary and Joseph about all that they saw and what the angels said. Mary did what we should all do; "Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart" (NASB).



When we allow God to speak to our heart it is then that we are able to see and experience Him. He is able to teach us His Word and speak to our needs. God through the profit Jeremiah said, "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people'"(Jeremiah 31:33-34 NASB).

Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:37, NLT)! David reflected on the things God had already done in his life. Like Mary, he kept these close to his heart so that when he did come up against a formidable situation he was able to encourage his heart by testifying about what God had already done. This empowered him to be able to stand with God.

Our challenges are allowing God's Word to be written on our heart and to seep into our spirit

Crystal A. Hood

The challenges that we face are not the things coming against us and shaking our world. Our challenges are allowing God's Word to be written on our heart and to seep into our spirit; letting our desire to be in

It is this intimate relationship with God that allows us to stand when our world is shaken or threatened. I love the passage that tells about David speaking to King Saul regarding fighting Goliath. In 1 Samuel 17 it records David telling King Saul of the times that God had helped him fight off a bear and a lion. David's relationship with God is like breathing. There is a natural connection. It is not a forced relationship. David testifies to King Saul, "The LORD who delivered me from the claws of the lion and the bear will deliver me from the hand of this

God's presence and reliance on Him to become as natural as breathing; learning to take the time to ponder on the things through which God has already seen us, and allowing it to encourage our heart.

As we strive daily to conquer these challenges there are times when we will need to ask ourselves, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God" (Psalm 43:5, NASB).

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hat word comes before "encourage" in the dictionary? In the Webster's Universal College dictionary, it lists the word "encounter immediately before the word "encourage". Each of us has, through daily experiences, the opportunity to follow that same short but important process, of first encountering, then encouraging.

As believers in God, our experience in the various seasons of life's opportunities and personal challenges, transforms us. Our encounters are transformed into fertile ground into which to we sow the seeds of our own encouragement. Before long, a perennial crop has emerged, that regardless of the season, God's increase is a crop of evergreen encouragement.

Our brother, John Hawkins, encourages those around him, through simple gestures, an uplifting word, and often a personal testimony. His smile, his greeting and his encouragement would not have been possible, had he not first by grace through faith, encountered our encouraging God.

John Hawkins (JH): Faith does not come by my simply sitting here talking to you today. Faith is something you build, over time. As time goes on it becomes stronger and stronger, and you come to depend on God through faith and never let your

faith go. Never let it go.

Linwood Childs (LC): These were some of the very first words that John and I shared together while we spoke recently

JH: I have been through different churches. And you don't appreciate all that God is and has, until you come to a place, a church, where you can *follow* along in the Word. Some churches I've been to, they preach about things that aren't even in the Bible.

Since I've been here at CCC, I thank God, and thank God for Pastor Elliott. I pray for Pastor Elliott, for he has made me understand the way to God. That's very powerful, for when you're on this side, trying to understand, just to have him break it down. This has happened through attending the services and coming to Bible Study during the week.

LC: You should have seen John's grimacing face as he uttered these next few words.

JH: I had been missing so much of what God has for me. But I'm at ease now, not anxious. I'm at ease in the midst of my life now. Whatever I'm going through, I talk to God first. That happens (Continued on Page 11)







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because I'm in Christ now. If I have a problem...or if I don't have a problem, I talk to Christ now.

LC: Where you always this way?

JH: Not at all! That was not the way it went down before. But since I've been here ... well!

LC: How did you come be here at CCC?

JH: A friend invited me to come here about 7 years ago. I fit here! Most of my life I've been somewhat connected to God. My mother held me tight to God. She raised us in a Catholic Church and home environment and we went to church regularly. She made me go to Sunday School. At the time, I didn't like that.

LC: As a child John readily discloses a growing challenge about the practice of confessing to the priest.

JH: Our Sunday School was on Saturday. A lot of it I didn't understand. They seemed to idolize statues. That's how I saw it, and how come I *had* to come to the priest to confess to God?

LC: When did you realize that you wanted something more from God?

JH: I realized it when I had trials and tribulations in my life. I came to realize that there had to be a better way. I was trying to do things right, but people around who claimed that they loved me were coming at me in a different way, a bad way. People who talked about God but didn't practice what they preached. Through a lot of trials and tribulations I realized that I needed help.

LC: John described his journey through different churches, how it grieved him when he noticed what was preached versus what was lived, just didn't fit together.

JH: I once was in the exact same situation.

Somehow, I realized that I could not serve Christ and the devil, too. Something was wrong. The reason why I knew it was wrong was because it ate me up inside, you know. It really did.

LC: John painfully recalled his internal conflict which began to overtake and really work on him.

JH: It got so bad until I really felt like just getting right up and walking out one church in the middle of the service. I didn't though, but I felt like it. That's exactly how I felt. That was the Lord pushing me.



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LC: How did you come be able to encourage other people?

JH: It came about through the not-so-good things that happened in my life. Not being able to find answers, and through frustrations. Things that never worked. I felt I was doing the right things but still something was missing. It wasn't until I, personally, turned to God that I started to get answers for my life; things started to come together. When things started to come together it made me realize, hey, my heavenly Father created me, and He has all the answers for me. In the midst of chaos, I stand strong because I talk to Him and I know He's there.

I pray on the prayer line in the morning, 5 am. About 3 – 4 months ago, one morning while we were praying (I have a little prayer room at home where I pray) during prayer everything lit up! It was like it was day, bright as day, and like Someone was speaking through a loud speaker. It was so good.

LC: What was your reaction?

JH: My eyes got big! But I wasn't afraid or anything like that. It was great; it was like everything just opened up.

LC: You were in the right spot at the right time.

JH: I know I was! But more importantly I know my heavenly Father has my back. I talk with Him and I take all my problems to Him. I understand even more that the devil was knocking on my door, all the time. I can feel that now. The closer you get to God, the more the devil will come knocking. You have to be steadfast in your faith!

LC: To get his personal point of view I asked him, "How?"

JH: Staying in the presence of the Lord, by praying. Pray in the morning, whenever you're going through a challenging moment during the day, praying on a constant basis. When you pray there is a calmness that comes over you. You've got to *pray*, that's my strength. Put your faith *in* God, for without that faith it's like talking to a wall.

LC: Is it a struggle for you to get up at 5am and pray?

JH: Yes and no! For over 40 years I got up every morning at 4am!

LC: Why?

(Continued on Page 13)



JH: I was a big rig truck driver and got up 4 o'clock almost every day, without an alarm clock. Now I do know this, now that I get up in the morning to pray and the devil tries to do something to me. When you recognize what the devil is trying to do to you, then you have a better sense of how to stay on course.

At other times when I need to get up early to do something there's no problem. I'm not sleepy. But when it comes to prayer time, then I'm sleepy, and it's like weights are on me!! I come to recognize that.

LC: Many people don't realize that the devil fights you.

JH: Yes. That is how I recognize him...when there's a fight.

LC: What encourages you to get up and pray?

JH: Prayer! I understand that this is the day the Lord has made, and He wants us to be happy! This is the path!

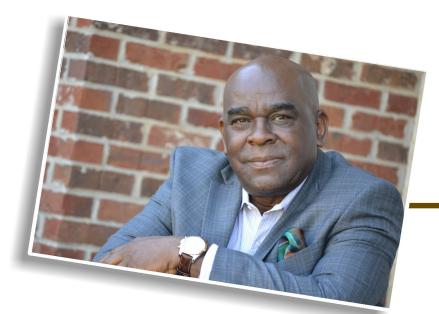
LC: Prayer is awesome. John recalled a few challenging times when it was time to pray and he overcame them by starting to pray while he as about to get up!

JH: There have been times I'll get up at 2 o'clock in the morning to pray and I'll stay up for the 5am

had a split second to decide ...God showed me just what to do

John Hawkins





prayer. One morning I was up early, praying and a scripture came to me so powerfully that I texted it to my grown kids. I just needed to share it with them, right then. Now my kids, I have tried to share Christ with them. But so far, they are on the other side. So, after I text them the scriptures, they called me back all concerned, saying, "Dad, are you alright? Is everything okay?" So, I just explained that I was up praying, talking to the Lord and wanted to send out a scripture to them to maybe help them. I said, "Maybe it will change your life and you'll think about reading the Bible. Start somewhere." My hope is that they'll recognize who their Savior is and come to Him. You see...

LC: He paused a moment or two and resumed his thought.

JH: You see, He *forgives*. He forgives us! I've lost a lot of friends, who really weren't friends. I have some neighbors that give negative feedback about me. I told one neighbor how good the Lord had been to me, he just said it wasn't the Lord that I just had that coming anyway. So, stay encouraged. If you don't someone could easily veer you off course.

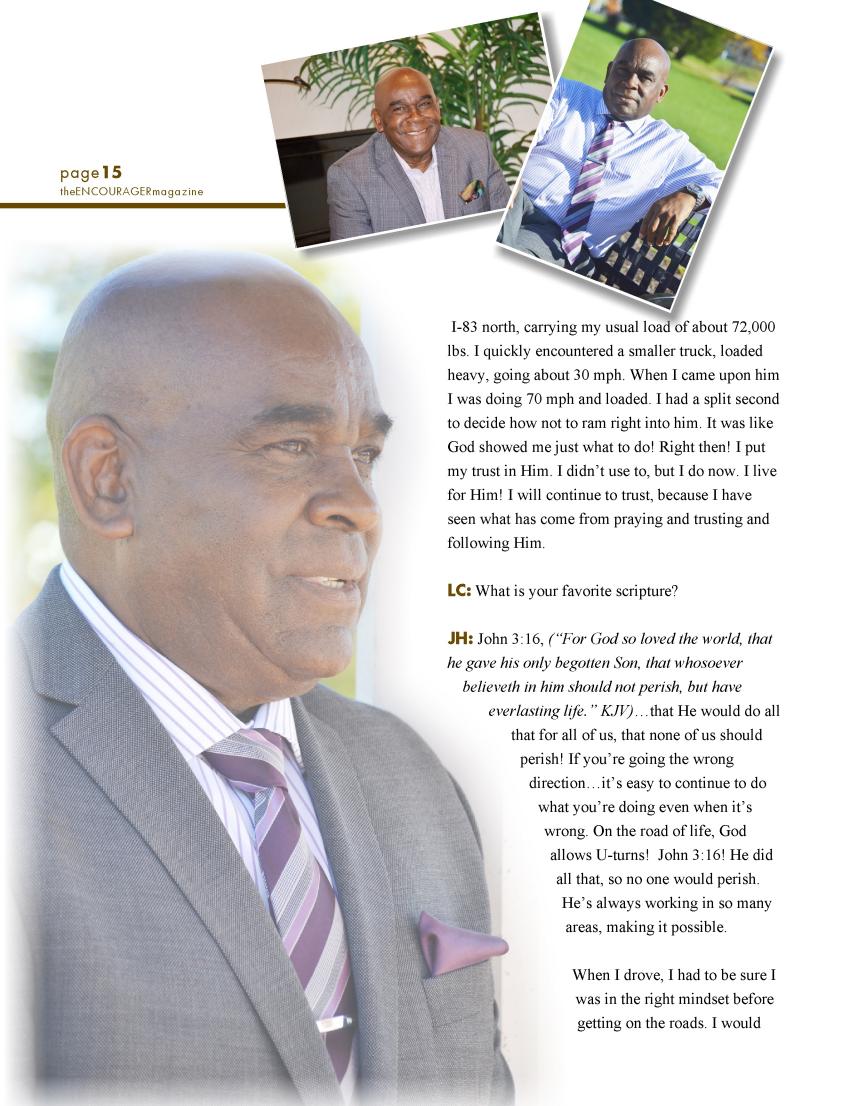
LC: John shared his active concern for his neighbors.

JH: My neighbors drink and drink, and these are not young people! Long time ago I used to, too! I see and realize that my neighbors are longing for God so badly. Yet many will say if you follow God you aren't a man, you're weak. But perhaps they're beginning to see the light. Every time they see me I'm up, I'm doing fine. They got to see a better life, and not just the things that they are doing. I realize people have to want it. I realize that all the old things I was doing, like what they're doing now, wasn't fixing the problems, it just covering them up for this or that particular night. And when they're done doing what they're doing, the exact same problem is still there, staring them in the face.

LC: John shook his head and sighed a deep breath.

Word the more we are sure that He really is going to take care of us. In the midst of chaos, *God* is in control. God is not surprised or unsure how He is going to take care of us. We are just as safe putting our trust in Him when things are going great as when it looks like everything is falling apart. There is a saying now, "the world is not falling apart, its falling in place" according to God's Word.

I put my trust in Him. One time driving my rig up (Continued on Page 15)





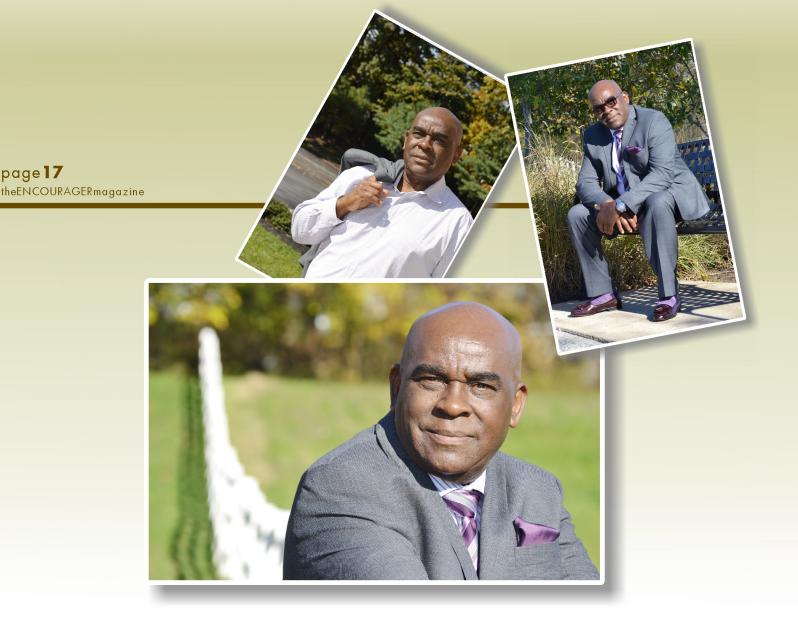
tell myself, "I'm trying to get from point A to point B. I'll get there, when I get there." I no longer worry about all that side stuff. If you don't set your mind, you can forget why you're even on the road, it's so dangerous out there. I told my mangers I'm carrying out my plan. I'm going to do what's right to get there.

LC: John shared about his experience as a witness to the power of salvation.

JH: There was abuse in my family. When I was

child, my father abused my mother physically, mentally, and emotionally. During that time she became a Christian and God really changed her. Through the power of God, mom learned who she was, she confronted and changed the entire situation. I watched as the Holy Spirit came into her life, as God made her a person of strength on many levels, and my father was no longer a match for her. He could not touch her any more. She was a good mother and saw that we got to church and stayed in church regularly. We had 17, but it was miraculous (Continued on Page 17)





to see what change that took place in our home.

LC: Were you an only child?

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JH: NO, there were 17 of us, but 2 passed away. So, you can imagine...God can take difficulty and turn it around. She completely forgave him and still treated him like nothing ever happened. We would marvel asking ourselves how could she dismiss all of that! She forgave him. That helped me so...to learn to let go. If you don't let go then you're just as bad as the person who did the bad thing.

On November 7, 2017 I was diagnosed with cancer. It threw me for moment, but God met me, and it's hard to describe but I felt that I was lifted up,

walking on air, pads under my feet. I can tell you about, but feeling it, I don't have the words. The 3-month check-up came back all clear. I have a year check-up and I know it is alright.

LC: What's your favorite song?

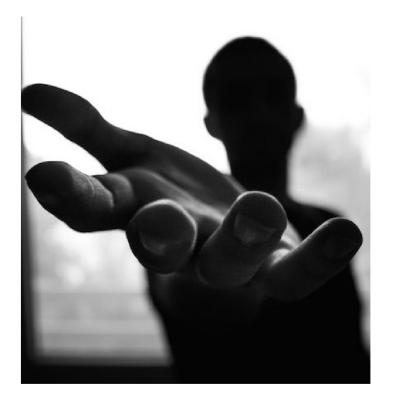
JH: Be Encouraged, no matter what going on, He'll make it alright, but you've got to be strong. So be en-cour-a-a-a-a-raged!

LC: John has started his own business of lawn care, expanding his equipment and services. We shared some more and ended by agreeing in faith for his business; that God would use him as a witness everywhere he went. Traveling encouragement.



ENCOURAGE YOURSELF IN THE LORD

e all have that one person or few people that we go to when we need encouragement. For many, it's a family member, close friend, or someone in the church. Encouragement can also come from strangers. I've had situations where someone I'd never met before gave me some encouragement that changed the trajectory of my life. God uses people to bless us, but let's never forget the power of prayer and looking to His Word for encouragement. I keep a small book on my desk that breaks scriptures up in categories so I can get a quick boost of His goodness as the work day goes along. It definitely fuels me and brings me to a place of peace. When I pray, it is the most genuine conversation because I can speak freely without fear of judgement. God already knows what we are going through and feeling. There is no need to sugarcoat or omit details about what we experience when praying. Ever have a situation where you told someone something in confidence and they used your words against you, or repeated it to someone else? Confiding in man can sometimes be problematic. Some people can also use your vulnerability to their advantage. You can also feel like you can only tell portions of your truth, which result in you not hearing the word that you may truly need. Some of my favorite scriptures of encouragement follow! God's word is so perfect and you can always count on Him and trust that He



John 16:33

"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."

has your best interest in mind. Keep seeking God in all you do.



LET US PRAY ANGELAHUNT BONITTO

EMPOWERING BELIEFS THROUGH PRAYER

ave you ever attended a life coach seminar?

If you have you

know how
electrifying
those seminars
can be and that
most people
walk out
feeling on top
of the world,
feeling
motivated, and
feeling
empowered.
But a week
later those

Prayer Room

feelings begin to fade away. Why, because life coaches teach that your success depends solely on YOU---your actions, your responses, your beliefs. The downside of this type of thinking is that as soon as something negative happens (i.e., you don't reach your sales goals, what you visualized didn't come to fruition, or you got passed up on that job promotion) your psychological and emotional state declines.

So how do we break from this type of thinking? How de we make a shift?

The answer is reconditioning our minds through

prayer.
When we surrender ourselves to God in prayer we have absolute certainty that whatever God said He would do will come to

pass. The prayer room is our never-ending empowerment seminar. When we walk out of the prayer room, having been in the presence of the Almighty, we are encouraged that our success doesn't depend on us as much as it depends on the God to whom we are surrendered. Christ empowers us through His Word. Scripture tells us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

That no weapon formed against us will prosper, and that He is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work in us. When we have this mindset that God is in control, and with God all things are possible, no matter what, we can accomplish virtually anything because when we're certain about who God is, we

can walk in faith.

When we walk in faith, we can get positive results, reinforcing our belief in Psalm 44 and that "we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37, KJV). Jesus died on the cross that we may have life more abundantly.

called prayer. If we submit to God in the prayer room daily our faith will be strengthened (Jeremiah 32:27), we will have favor (Genesis 39:3-4), our financial situations will change (Deuteronomy 29:9), and we will certainly have a better life (Jeremiah 29:11).

By reconditioning our minds, we make a



So, we don't have

to pay hundreds of dollars to go to an empowerment seminar to get pumped up to sell more, or learn to repeat mantras to get healed, or get a reassurance that we're okay. The Word is free. Getting direction from God is free. He has provided us with a tool conscious effort to transition into a new state of being that will eventually change our world. Instead of being ruled by self we will feel empowered by God's grace, mercy and power. You want a better life. You want to live up to your full potential. Make a commitment today to be empowered through prayer.

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

s December 2018 brings us to the close of another year I am sure we can reflect on God's goodness towards each of us. I am reminded of this quarter's theme, Be Encouraged, and can say beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Lord has demonstrated His loving kindness, compassion, and care through the encouragement process. The Lord masterfully integrates and weaves His love in the everyday affairs of life to sustain, strengthen, motivate, and encourage us to continue in our faith and to shine His light, particularly during the holiday season when so many are discouraged, sad, and in need.

Scripture instructs us that it is better to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Often times the holiday season is the perfect opportunity to exercise our charity. However, our acts of kindness should not be limited and seasonal, but an ongoing part of our nature as Christians and one of the hallmarks of our faith and lifestyle. Reach out by giving to others in need not only when it's expected or convenient. We need to actively make decisions and condition our minds to serve others in this way. This is a form of encouragement of which we can all partake. As we see a need that we can satisfy make a willful decision to act. The Bible admonishes us to be about doing good and that, "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17, KJV). We often think that giving is always in the form of money. We can give of our time, our talents, our gifts, our service, and our presence. Ask the Lord to show and give opportunities for us to help others. He will do it!

I am reminded of an incident where an apparent homeless and hungry man entered into a casual dining establishment where I was having lunch by myself. He asked me for some change to buy something to eat. I felt the prompting of the Holy Spirit to buy this man lunch.

Reluctant to do so, I found myself trying to ignore the gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit and found myself justifying my disobedience by convincing myself that because I had used all of my cash I would not be able to meet his need (since he asked for cash, but knowing full well that I had my debit card). In his unsuccessful attempts to panhandle, the man left. I said to the Lord, "If I was supposed to buy that man lunch please send him back". Within five minutes the gentleman returned and he locked eyes with mine. The Lord gave me the opportunity again to be obedient, and to use me to bless this man. To this man's amazement and disbelief, I instructed him to purchase whatever he wanted on the menu, and I used my debit card. The blessing was two-fold. The homeless man was very thankful and I was able to witness the goodness of the Lord to him, and I was blessed knowing that I pleased the Lord by being obedient (He IS a God of second-chances LOL).

It really doesn't take a lot to encourage others. Whenever we can we should make giving a willful and conscious act. God gave His best to us through Jesus Christ...let's be examples and witnesses of God's generosity, and be stellar stewards by giving as it was given to us. Give until it becomes as natural as the air we breathe. God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). When we, ourselves, are in need there is a simple solution -- GIVE. Our prosperity is tied to God's principle of giving, so give and it shall be given to you (Luke 6:38). In our obedience we will find the truth of God's Word manifested in our own lives and will know first-hand that "a generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed" (Proverbs 11:25, NIV). As an extra motivation and ENCOURAGEMENT remember that God watches over His Word to perform it. Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, and Have a Happy, Prosperous, Healthy & Safe New Year!

Michael



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 STRVICES

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