





ON THE COVER

Long-time congregants, James & Cathy Ayers, share warm smiles and a loving embrace as they pose for the camera during their photoshoot on 03/07/21.

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2021

TABLE OFCONTENTS

PAGE A Word from the Word

PAGE 3 God's Expectation: Taylor Landrum

PAGE 4 Christian Comedy Corner

PAGE 5 Featured Article: Kim Odoms-Bolden

PAGE The Librarian's Desk: Desiree Collins

PAGE Family Focus: Crystal A. Hood

PAGE 9 Getting to Know: James & Cathy Ayers

PAGE 21 Let Us Pray: Angela Hunt Bonitto

PAGE 23 In Memoriam

The state of the s

THE MAGAZINESTAFF Apr 2021

PASTORS

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

EDITOR

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
Angela Hunt-Bonitto
Carolyn Jackson
Winnie LaFrance-Chambers
Taylor Landrum
Brenda Manokey
Min. Michael Manokey
Kim Odoms-Bolden
Earl Slacum
Michael Spry

The Encourager Magazine is a quarterly publication of Columbia Community Church

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

On The Web: www.columbiaccmd.org

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

As a member or guest of Columbia Community Church, we want to notify you that your photograph or image may be recorded during services or church events. Your entrance into CCC grants permission to use your image in print and electronic media material.

page**01**theENCOURAGERmagazine



A WORD FROM THE WORD PASTOR REGINALD L.ELLIOTT

I beseech you
therefore, brethren,
by the mercies
of God,
that you
present your bodies a

living sacrifice

holy, acceptable unto God which is your

Reasonable Service

Romans 12:1, KJV

REASONABLESERVICE

n Romans 12:1 the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul, speaks of believers performing what is called their "reasonable service" before God. He tells them that what is called reasonable service begins with them presenting their bodies as a living sacrifice before God, and then not conforming to the world they live in.

[Believers]
must present
themselves to God
as one would
bring a sacrifice...

Pastor Reginald L. Elliott

As we read Romans 12 it is clear that the idea of reasonable service is speaking of the type of life they are to live. They must present themselves to God as one would bring a sacrifice, and avoid

conforming their behavior to the world's standards. The process of presenting themselves to God is so God can use them. Although it is their life, they are limited as to what they can do with it without God's help. He is reminding them of a truth that is repeated continually throughout Scripture, and it is this – man needs God to direct him if he is to live in

a manner that is pleasing to God, he cannot do it without God. In Jeremiah 10:23 the prophet speaks these words to ancient Israel "...it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." No matter who we are, on our own, we are not capable of making daily decisions that will please God, decisions that will constitute reasonable service.

We cannot understand what reasonable service is without God revealing it to us, and we can only do it through submitting our lives to God. As we let God rule our lives, we will come to know His will for our lives and be able to serve Him as He desires us to.

Reasonable service is what we do when God directs us in all phases of our lives. Since we can only perform reasonable service to the degree we let Him reign, let us commit to letting Him reign.



GOD'S EXPECTATION TAYLOR LANDRUM

esus is Lord over everything. His life is the living example of God among us – both literally and practically. When anyone who knows anything about Him thinks of Jesus' life, we think of an entire existence centered on mercy, kindness, and servitude. Jesus did *nothing* for Himself in the earthly sense; rather, everything He did was to please His Father in Heaven. For us, the great blessing is that God's will is full of goodness towards us, and in doing God's will, everywhere Jesus went He performed miracles of healing and sustenance. Whenever we as Christians – followers of and believer in Christ – are looking to learn about a topic, our first authority should always be Jesus Christ Himself. Our goal is to emulate the life of Jesus as best we are able, and when it comes to our reasonable service in this life, Jesus gives a plethora of direction. The phrase "reasonable service" places a level of expectation upon us, but by its very definition, it also tells us that this expectation is one we can absolutely expect to meet. Never in life will God place something before you that you are unable to overcome. God is with you ALWAYS – as Romans 8:31 tells us, "If God be for us, who can ever be against us?" Though life undoubtedly will send things your way that YOU do not feel you can withstand, if God is with you, what test can you not pass? A huge obstacle to many of us in our path to service for Christ is our own self-doubt. Especially in a Christian walk, we spend much of our time reflecting on ourselves and how we live and act. Undoubtedly, we find many shortcomings in our daily lives. The Bible directs us in this way – without recognizing our own condition we can

never come to Christ in the humble mind that God wants us to. At the same time, we have to remember that the Bible says Christ forgives us for our shortcomings, which means that as important as it is to remember that you have fallen short of the glory of God, you are forgiven. Your sins are cast as far from you as the East is from the West. While we ourselves are not comparable to Jesus, we ARE capable of portraying His light through us, despite any shortcomings we may have. The great blessing of Jesus is that He was tempted in every way like we are, yet He withstood every temptation. Our blessing to others is that we are tempted in every way like they are, but are forgiven through Christ and inherit eternal life. Every person you meet is able to gain this same inheritance - and our reasonable service is to live our lives in a way that brings as many people with us as we can. Reasonable service is not a competition, and it is no way comparable between two people. Just because you're not a pastor or an evangelist doesn't mean that you don't have both an ability and a duty to serve God. God has created each of us uniquely, and with that individuality comes a one-of-a-kind ability to both connect with Him and bring other people to Him. Every act of kindness, every act of mercy, every act of self-sacrifice and servitude to others done in a true spirit of Christ is a service to Him. Even amongst Bible heroes the reasonable service differs from person to person – Moses' walk was different from Abraham's, Abraham's walk was different from Job's. God's expectation is not for you to live perfectly or to be like anyone else – God's expectation for us is to place our faith in Him, and to serve Him in the way that YOU are able.

CHRISTIAN COMEDY CORNER CAROLYNJACKSON

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine"

Proverbs 17:22 (KJV)

My Parents... are so paranoid in this pandemic that they are dodging people like people dodging bullets in action movies.



What did one blade of grass say to

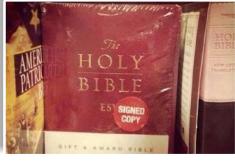
another about the lack of rain?
"I guess we'll just have to make dew!"

Me (sobbing my heart out, eyes swollen, nose red): I can't see you anymore. I am not going to let you hurt me like this again! Trainer: It was a sit up. You did one sit up.



Age 60 might be the new 40, but 9:00 pm is the new midnight.

When you ask me what I am doing today, and I say "nothing," it does not mean I am free. It means I am doing nothing.



John worked in the book store and had

one job to do, to place stickers on

books ready for purchase. Please explain: Signed copy?? By whom pray tell!

Blesssings 2U, Sister Carolyn Jackson Brother Collin Dunlap

When, Where, What, and How?

FEATURED ARTICLE

as complex and as difficult as times are, God has provided Christians, those who are called by His name, behavioral conduct--guidelines, if you will, on how to serve Him in a practical and sensible fashion. The Bible tells us Christians are on a journey that is traveled on a narrow road. Thus,

calling oneself a
Christian and living as a
Christian are two very
different things. On this
journey called life,
spiritual beings living a
human existence will
need to "Make every
effort to live in peace

with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14, NIV).

How might we practically live out this journey? Glad you asked. In the book of Ecclesiastes God tells us to, "Honor and enjoy your Creator while you're still young. Before the years take their toll and your vigor wanes, Before your vision dims and the world blurs and the winter years keep you close to the fire. In old age, *your body no longer serves you so well*. Muscles slacken, grip weakens, joints stiffen. The shades are pulled down on the world. You can't come and go at will. Things grind to a halt... Hikes to the mountains are a thing of the past.

Even a stroll down the road has its terrors. Your hair turns apple-blossom white, adorning a fragile and impotent matchstick body." Before you know it, "Yes, you're well on your way to eternal rest...Life as we know it, precious and beautiful, ends. The body is put back in the same ground it came from.

The spirit returns to God, who first breathed it" (Ecclesiastes 12:1-7, MSG).

If we wait to serve God when our own bodies, "no longer serves" us so well how will we best serve the

Lord? Glad you asked. In the word of God, our Father in Heaven tells us to "Make very sure that you never refuse to listen to God when He speaks! For the God who spoke on earth from Sinai is the same God who now speaks from heaven. Those who heard Him speak His living Word on earth found nowhere to hide, so what chance is there for us to escape if we turn our backs on God and refuse to hear His warnings as He speaks from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25, TPT)? Having our ears turned toward heaven and hearing His warnings in these perilous times is paramount and key to living and thriving, keeping our heads attached to our holy bodies above these torrential times.



Scripture continues stating, "The earth was rocked at the sound of his voice from the mountain, but now he has promised, 'Once and for all I will not

only shake the systems of the world, but also the unseen powers in the heavenly realm!'

Now this phrase 'once and for all' clearly indicates the final removal of things that are shaking, that is, the old order, so only what is unshakable will remain. Since we are receiving our rights [living as Christians] to an

unshakable kingdom we should be extremely thankful and offer God the purest worship that delights his heart as we lay down our lives in absolute surrender, filled with awe. For our God is a holy devouring fire (Hebrews 12:26-29, TPT)!

With that said, the questions of when, where, what and how are answered. When: when we are young or NOW in our present time. When answers where, and the answer is NOW. How: by making sure we listen to God when He speaks. What: offer God the purest worship that delights His heart, "Wherefore

we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28-29, KJV).



God is such a lover of our souls that our choices in these complex and difficult times He will oblige. If we allow God's consuming, devouring fire to remove the shakable things in our life to present our bodies as holy, a reasonable service, serving God and offering Him the purest worship that delights His heart, we will experience our inheritance, an unshakeable kingdom here on Earth and in the Heavenly realm.

Don't let your vigor wane and live life in vain

page**07**theENCOURAGERmagazine



hen we gave our life to God and accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we were no longer our own, our life now belongs to God. Our lives became living sacrifices dedicated to pleasing God, which is our "reasonable service". Indeed, our living should be an act of worship, holy and acceptable, not given over to the short comings of sin. The Holy Spirit resides is our bodies; our temples, constantly transforming and renewing the believing body into a sanctified place were the Holy Spirit can reside.

Christ died on the cross for the sins of all mankind. He gave his holy life as a ransom for our past, present and future sins. We are not our own to do as we please, we are members of Christ's body, and our body is Christ's temple. Therefore, "...they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15,KJV).

We are here to do the will of God on Earth; we are God's hands at work on Earth. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God has equipped us with everything we need to accomplish His will/work on Earth. We have been granted the confidence that His righteousness has granted us, we are complete in Christ.

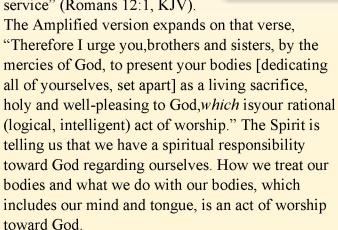
Lord, help us to remember that Christ has already secured the victory, when we are tempted to fall short of His Holy Word.

"I appeal to you therefore brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not to conform to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans



FAMILY FOCUS

he Spirit led Paul to write, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1, KJV).



He is reminding us that as a Christian we have a daily choice to make regarding whether to surrender all that we are to God or not. The habits with which we are born, our family environment and our experiences with others shape who we are. They are the basis on which we approach life. Our thoughts, actions, and communications are influenced by these factors. Due to our sin nature these influences are in opposition to God's will.

We do not need to be stuck with the bonds that we received from birth. Self-will allows for our perspective and values to veer away from the perspective and values promoted by our family or society. When we choose Christ as our Savior we are no longer held into what we were born, but are



connected to our spiritual family in which God is our Father, Jesus is our brother and the Holy Spirit resides within us teaching us God's ways. Jesus stated to His disciples, "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is

My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50, BSB).

As we choose to yield to the urging of the Holy Spirit we are transformed away from what we received from our earthly family and society; we are shaped toward the ways of our heavenly family. The degree to which the Holy Spirit changes our thoughts, actions and communication is dependent on the degree to which we submit these areas to God.

When we spend time in prayer we need to anoint ourselves with oil. Anoint our head (mind), ear (hearing), eyes (focus), tongue (speaking) and chest (heart/spirit). We then should ask the Lord to help us be a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to Him by what we accept into our mind (what we think about); by what we hear (what we allow to influence us); by where we look (keeping our focus on Him) and by what we allow into our heart and spirit (our treatment of self and others). In this way the Holy Spirit helps our body to transform from reflecting our earthly family to reflecting our Heavenly family. This will enable our bodies to be living sacrifices, "...holy, acceptable unto God, which is [our] reasonable service" and worship God.

page **09** the ENCOURAGER magazine



240,000 -\$50 thousand dollars

hy do we do the things we do? The true reasons behind our actions or reactions, may be a mystery to friends, family and even to ourselves. But sometimes true testimonies can powerfully reshape our own personal answers to the psalmist's reasonable question, "What shall I render unto God for *all* His benefits toward me?" I was recently blessed to hear the 'why' of our James and Cathy Ayres.

Linwood Childs (LC): What types of things do you like to do?

Cathy Ayres (CA): I like to bake and cook.

LC: You're the one that built the wardrobe cabinet for Pastor Elliott?

James Ayres (JA): Yes, I.

LC: Are your guys retired?

CA: I've been-retired since 2008, James is still working.

JA: I started woodcrafting in the 10th grade. I do home-improvements, basements. A new home owner of a former co-worker wanted their basement redone. Contractors wanted to charge

thousands of dollars, \$40,000 -\$50 thousand dollars for their basement. They asked me if I would do it for them and I did. It took a while because I did it by myself, after hours and weekends. After I was done, the builder of the house walked through that basement, saw it and said they wanted to use it as a model home. The basement was big, and I put in a walk-in cedar closet; a sewing room; a full bathroom; full movie theatre room, with a walk-up floor and an in-wall large movie screen; a signature ceiling wall (a trade secret), bedroom and basement family room. It only cost them \$17,000, not \$50k. I do most things for free, as a hobby, just for friends and family. I thank God for the trade He gave me! And of course, I did my own basement too.

LC: There are always untold stories. How long have you been with CCC?

CA: We knew the Elliotts for way over 25 -30 years, even before Slayton House, when our kids were young and went to the same schools. We knew him when he used to preach for Pastor Robert Davis Sr. at Long Reach. Some of the changes we've seen is the growth of the membership and expansions of the church building. But the spiritual growth of the congregation, and we all grew together, that's what I like about it.

Continued on Page 11)

by
the
grace
of
God

that I made it back home

James Ayers







page 11 theENCOURAGERmagazine

JA: Our pastor really puts out the Word!

CA: I think that that's the basic thing that draws people is the *truth*! Like the Bible says, the truth sets you free, and of course the Spirit of God moving among us. All of that is a wonderful thing because our pastor preaches the truth – that makes it contagious, no matter where you've been and been through. He makes you feel welcome, no strangers.

Pastor Elliott encourages you, and does not condemn you – it's not all hell and brimstone, and if you don't do this or don't do that. After he preaches, he leaves it up to God to excel that Word, and change lives.

JA: That's what impressed me, Pastor never asks for anything. Even during Pastor's day, he's not talking about himself. It's about all of us, how we all have made it. It's never about himself

CA: He's grateful and compassionate. God has really blessed us.

LC: Awesome, it inspires people to want to help people and not condemn, but truly help them. When you've been treated that way, you can't but help pass on your good experiences.

CA: I don't know how many people have come with a bad attitude or in a bad place and left with

a whole new way of thinking.

LC: So both are long-standing members from the early days of Columbia Community Church; days that saw God start a new labor of love with just a few saints.

CA: It's always good to have someone encourage you on your journey, because we have never been this way, at this place in our lives. Since this Covid-19 I will cook for others and go to the market, and keep in contact with the saints. Everyday I'm on the morning prayer line. I love God's people. That's my main purpose, to serve God's people.

Many years ago before I even came to CCC, I was in my dining room, I sensed God definitely speak to me, "I've have called you to minister to my people". By me being a young Christian, not knowing very much, I thought it was for the unsaved, you know, introducing people to Christ. One of James' friends, his wife went into the hospital and she called us about 12 o'clock, all upset, and crying and boohooing. I said to myself, oh my God what's the matter? So, I ministered to her, I think that she was the first one that I had ever ministered to, still not knowing that I was walking in my calling. Then others started calling and I tried to help them. You know, this is not a selfish walk, for we are our brother's and sister's keeper. So,



page 12 the ENCOURAGER magazine

I've learned to walk in what He's placed me.

I enjoy praying for God's people and seeing the various outcomes. James and I pray every morning before he walks out of the door at 4:45 a.m. He has to be at work really early. We have a special prayer we pray, first we thank God for watching over us and keeping us. Then we pray for our family, friends, Pastor and others. We ask God to make us a blessing in this blessed day He has given us, in our going out and out coming in. And I plead the blood over James, that the Lord gives him traveling mercies. I thank God for that prayer time, it's something *God has given us, for He is blessing us and keeping us*.

JA: Yeah, I have to be at work at 5:30 a.m. I'm up very early usually 4 o'clock.

LC: How far is your ride to work?

JA: It's not very far, I work for the Federal Government in Fort Mead.

CA: We have prayer before he leaves at 4:45, and then at 5 o'clock I'm on the prayer line. So I'm very grateful because God gave us that prayer time many years ago.

LC: What an awesome testimony. Cathy are you an

early riser by nature?

CA: I used to work for NIH (National Institutes of Health) in Bethesda and that is a good distance from where we live, Elkridge/Columbia area. And at that time if you got on 495 it was something traveling that road then. I'm up at 4:45 a.m. and then on the prayer line at 5 a.m. Even when we don't have prayer I'm up praying. I guess my body is just used to it now!

JA: I'm usually up by 4 o'clock, sometimes 3:30 a.m. My favorite philosophy is, you're burning daylight, get up!

LC: So, tell me about answered prayers! What has God done?

CA & JA: Oh, so many things!

JA: I can tell you about a real good one we just received. We've been on the website trying to get registered for the vaccine shot for this virus. Well, we tried for 3 – 4 days in a row, sometimes for up to 3 – 4 hours and we could not get through. Every time they would tell us to just start over, start all over. My wife and I both tried. So, I while I was at the nearby Giant, the pharmacist heard me talking to the clerk about it. The pharmacist called out to (Continued on Page 13)

me, and said, "James come here a minute. Give me your name and information and your wife's, I'm going to get you that vaccine." The next day we were certified to have the shot! That was Monday, we had the shot on Thursday.

CA: Yes, we had prayed and said when God gets ready, we'll get that shot. When he came back from the pharmacy he said, "God blessed me, God blessed me – we're going to get the shot." When we turn it over to God, He works it out.

Something else happened too. James had knee surgery in February 2020 and when he came home from the hospital, he overdosed twice! Once while I was away at some training, while his sister was

here, but he recovered. Then again the next day while I was here with him alone. I started pleading the blood of Jesus, and he came back. I called the ambulance, they came and got him. Later when we came to the hospital then they told us that they gave him the wrong medication.

JA: They prescribed me two times the dosage I should have had. I tell you another one. I was working and got sick on the job. My coworkers saw I needed them to call an ambulance, and they did. I called my wife. At hospital I told them I needed help right *now*. The second time I said it and sat up straight in the bed and said, "You all are too late", and I was gone. The next thing I knew I was coming to, with all these tubes coming out of me.

My main purpose

[is to] serve

God's people

Cathy Ayers





CA: they called it a code blue. But God brought him back!

JA: Just when they were about to give me that electric shot, I woke up *and* sat up! I knew I was coming back.

CA: The closer you get to God the more the devil tries to discourage you. But you've got to hold on. I tell everyone, hold on! The battle is already won. We're just fighting our way through it. If you start praising God in that battle, oh the SON will shine! I'm not talking about the SUN, but the SON will come down with you.

JA: Even on the road to work every morning, I am praying.

CA: We have the church prayer line. People come on there and they are blessed, healed and delivered. We've been on there for over a year and half and it's growing. God has truly, truly blessed and the anointing has been there. God causes us to pray for what the people need. We don't just come on there and just pray for anything. God is leading us to pray for the needs of the people, and for other congregations also; for the nations, world leaders, the unsaved, those that have voids in their lives, and souls hanging in the balance. It could be

anyone, those who are being tormented or think they have had a bad life and think that God can't heal them, we especially pray for them.

LC: God brings people to our hearts, that we might be part of what He wants to do in their life. Sometimes people know and sometime they don't.

CA: Exactly, God knows what we all stand in the need of. You know what I'm saying. We are so glad He looks past our faults and sees our needs, for all of us are still under construction. You know we have not arrived yet. We won't get there until we're home with Jesus. In the meantime, God has shown us the mystery...praise and worship brings God in our presence, whether you're young or old. We encourage people to keep holding on.

LC: The devil wants to make this life so complicated. The goal is to stay with God. The true work is to believe.

CA: I remember when I was younger, that I used to be timid and scared of *everything*. I was about six or seven years old when one of my friends died in the alley between our houses. I *had* to leave that house and I stayed with my aunt for months for I was just scared of that kind of stuff. Later, when I got saved, I was a little afraid to praise God, for I thought if you praised God too hard then the devil

(Continued on Page 15)



page 15
theENCOURAGERmagazine

will cause something to happen or this or that will go wrong. But it's a lie from the pit of hell! God said persecutions shall come, but I will deliver you from it all. Once we get a hold of that, there's no stopping us now.

LC: Amen! You don't need to handle this by yourself; all you need to do is keep in step with the Holy Ghost. All you need is faith, in God.

CA: Nothing is impossible with God. All the things that concern us, He is concerned about. Everything, to the smallest degree! We all have something to praise God for. For instance, we all plan our day, at some level. But Lord I'm going to praise you and expect you to direct my path. You don't know what God will have us do daily, or who to reach out to, or give to, or help along the way. Our whole duty is to serve God.

JA: Amen!

CA: I appreciate my husband for he's a giver. Its nothing that he won't do for anybody. It took me a minute to come up to that point! Hey, hey! Thank you, Jesus! But we've been blessed. I have come in the house and said I'm going to give somebody this check to help them out in some area of need, but the first thing he'll say is, "Just add it on to what

you're giving, so here's my bit." I thank God for that, everybody is not like that. But we both learned that as we give to God, God gives back to you. Thank God, for my children are blessed like that, and it's because of him. We've got three girls, always, always he asks if I've heard from them – do they need something? In my family we say we're a circle; if one needs then we all help, it's a circle. There is not need in this family because if I've got it then you've got it. I thank God and I know it comes from my husband being a giver and watching over his girls. He didn't have any boys, so, we all learned to put drywall up, and to nail. My girls will do it in minute! We'll upholster chairs and fix anything. I taught them how to cook and he told them how to be self-sufficient. So, it's a blessing.

JA: Ah, yes. I've hit my thumbs so many times, until I finally learned how tack it in and drive it in with one hammer.

LC: Are you originally from the Baltimore area?

JA: Yes, as they say, we're from the west side.
Baltimore had changed dramatically over the years.
We lived over in the area of Edmondson and
Monroe. That's where we grew up, you know it
takes a family to raise a child. That whole
neighborhood knew every kid in the block. If you



did something wrong, they would call your mother, your grandmother and everybody.

LC: I still remember Miss Virginia and she watched everything. I mean everything. When she saw us acting up, she'd say, I'm going to tell your momma!

JA: Well, we had Miss Wright. I tell you we thought she had binoculars! I'd be three blocks away and she'd called my grandmother and told her I was three blocks away doing something! My grandmother would come down the street with a broom and whip us all the way back home.

CA: But James' grandmother would gather all the kids, wake them up every Sunday and take them to church. Every last child.

JA: Enon Baptist Church. We were like 8 years old, and my grandmother would walk up and down Edmondson avenue locate every kid she could find, and we would walk from the 1800 block of Edmonson Avenue to Enon Baptist, at least 15 blocks, about a mile.

LC: That was priceless.

CA: Yes, people cannot even relate to that time.

The thing is we didn't even know that we were being blessed! We do now.

LC: How did you two meet?

CA: We grew up in same neighborhood, just about a block away from each other.

JA: I went into Army, trained in California and after basic training went straight to Vietnam. It was by the grace of *God* that I made back home. Many, many a times I should have been dead, but the Lord watched over me and brought me home. So, I knew He had something for me.

LC: He has been watching over you for many years.

CA: When he got out, he came back to Maryland and we got married. Come this July we'll be married 53 years.

JA: After the army, I signed up to be State
Trooper. Now I knew all the drug dealers and they
knew me. One day during the initial training, one of
my "friends" asked me why I wanted to become a
State Trooper. I told him that it's just what I wanted
to do. He told me I would not last a week. I asked
him why he said that. He said because you know
too many of us, you would not last a week. When
(Continued on Page 17)

page 17 the ENCOURAGER magazine



my daughters were about 3 years old, I saw the whole neighborhood change and everyone was doing drugs, getting high and getting in trouble. "That's it," I said, "we are moving out of town." I backed that truck up and we moved to Columbia.

CA: God knows how to take care of those who belong to Him.

JA: Pastor Elliott preached a while back that everybody is looking for a sign. He said just look back and see how much He has already brought you through. See all the things God has *done* for you. You know you didn't do it. Read the signs! Just read the signs!

CA: I always say, the good, the bad and the ugly, God uses it all. He used every last bit of it, to bring me to where I am today. I give God the glory for it.

JA: Look at what He's kept me from. Everyone around me was doing drugs, but not me. God never allowed me to do that. I would try to stop anyone who was trying to do drugs. I would ask them, "Are you crazy, are you trying to kill yourself?" God had a hold on me.

LC: Just think about how many did not make it back from Vietnam.

JA: Oh yes, Bro. Childs! In Vietnam, they were sniping people who were going home. When some guys were leaving the fighting to go home, there were snipers that would take them out. Well, we formed a unit in my platoon, so that if you were getting ready to go home then you never went back out on patrol. So, if you had 10 or 15 days left, you no longer went on patrol. And when it was time for you to go, we escorted you to the plane, up the steps. If there was a shot, we took the shot and you got on the plane.

LC: Awesome! Down through the years God has been good to you.

JA: God has been good to me. He certainly has blessed me. The Lord has brought me through cancer. I was diagnosed with prostate cancer last year. They said we're going to have to treat you with, this, this and this. They then took a less aggressive path, saying let's only do radiation. Well today, I'm cancer free. Then I had a heart attack. I was walking my dog one day, cold and snowing. I'm walking my dog and all of sudden I feel this pain in my chest. I fell on the ground and the dog left and went home and left me laying in the snow! I finally woke up, walked home and told my wife what happened. I still had a pain in my back. So, we went to the ER and that's when they told me



page 18 the ENCOURAGER magazine

that I just had a heart attack. I told him he was crazy, and went home. The very next day, I was back in the hospital.

CA: But let me tell you what happened. We went to Johns Hopkins and I'll never forget it. The test came back at 90% blockage in several arteries. They said if we open one part, then the other part might fail while we're doing the surgery and he might die. On the day of the surgery, 6 or 7 of us came to the hospital with him. And when they came out to tell us that they were scared to do the procedure, we all started praying. They came back later and told us the arteries or the capillaries all started to have increased blood flow, so much so until they did not have to do the balloon procedure at all! He never had the surgery. I will *never* forget it!

LC: This is amazing!

JA: God brought me through again.

CA: It's a testimony. I tell you he's been through something. We don't talk about it unless someone asks us about it.

LC: This is a powerful testimony.

CA: We're just so grateful.

JA: I'm just very thankful.

and God showed up. This is what we need to see, because some think only the devil is moving. But look at God! It makes a difference. God stopped death, raised you to health, sent prayer warriors to witness his blessing.

CA: I know what God can do! About a couple of months ago, James went to work, early as usual and dark. A car was stuck in the very middle of the road, when James got up on it all he could see was a man in the lane telling him to move over, move over. It was pitch black. James just missed him and the car by inches. It was nothing but the grace of God giving us traveling mercy and he went on to work. He said all he could do was pray, God don't let nobody else come up on that man and hit him.

JA: It was in a blind curve coming off of 195, no lights. There were two cars, stopped in the lane and one driver was trying to motion other drivers to move over. With a split second to move left or to the right, I missed him by an inch. Whew! I did call it in. I look at my life like this, I'm a walking testimony.

(Continued on Page 17)

LC: Yes, you are. Are you thinking about retiring?

JA: I'm going to continue to work, but there are things I want to do, like woodworking. So, I'm still thinking.

LC: Cathy what advice would you give to those still working but thinking about retiring, since you've been retired since 2008?

CA: Make a plan to pay off the little bills. Then take that money and pay off the larger bills. Don't retire and then *have* to go back to work. You want retire an enjoy yourself. A while ago I listened to this man who prayed to God about how to get out of all his debt. Here's what he said the Lord told him. Pay the minimum on the large bills and pile down on the small bills. Get them paid off and pile down on the next one. He said he came out of debt real fast, that God gave him this strategy.

LC: God wants to help you no matter where you are, God does not condemn you, He helps you.

CA: We just don't thank God enough. We would not even wake up in the morning if it was not for God. Then praise Him for what He's going to do.



Go ahead and ask him, and believe. The main thing is believing God. We ask but then we want God to answer the way we want Him to answer, but often this isn't so. We have to learn to be content with God's ways, which are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts. And the plans He has for us are not the plans we have for ourselves. No easy place to get to, but give thanks in everything. We need to thank God, ask for what want and believe that we have it.

JA: I learned to never say if it be Thy will, when you pray. You just voided your prayer. God wants to bless more than we know. Pray according to His promises.

CA: We have to learn how to express ourselves. If you're not feeling your best on a day, say I've got some challenges but God is a healer, speak His Word and don't be negative. Just believe, just believe. We can do all things through Christ which strengthens us. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

JA: My favorite song, is "Peace, Be Still", especially by James Cleveland.

CA: Remember we have to learn how to trust God, learn to wait on Him, and be content where we find ourselves. We have turned our lives over to Him, and when He gets ready for something to happen, it happens. He has the last word.

LC: Thank you James and Cathy.
Who would not serve a God like this?



GOD WANTS YOU

LET US PRAY
ANGELAHUNT BONITTO

s I reflect on this quarter's theme,
Reasonable Service, and put into context with
prayer, one cannot overlook that it is only right that

we commit to a lifestyle of prayer. God deserves it from us. If prayer is just simply talking to God, why do we, as the young people say, "ghost" God, go silent and only resurface when it benefits us?

Prayer is mentioned more than 650 times in the Bible. It advanced everything Jesus did. Jesus said I can do nothing without the Father. One can only reason that if Jesus could do nothing without the Father, He had to be in constant

communications with the Father. As Christians, our job, according to Matthew 28:19-20, is to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything He has commanded us." We are to be full of the Spirit and led by the Spirit. But this can only happen if we spend time with the Father who gives of the Spirit and wisdom freely to those who ask. Asking comes when we spend time with the Lord.

So I will ask again, why do we "ghost" God? I once read an article in *Relevant Magazine* that put it in simple terms: "We all desire or aspire to have quiet

time with the Lord, but we just don't get around to it." That struck me as interesting. What if God took the same approach to us and didn't get around to waking us up in the morning, or didn't get around to healing that sickness in our body, or didn't get around to saving us from financial destruction. Where would we be if God simply went "ghost" on us?

God desires a relationship with His people. We are told to "Delight yourself in the Lord

and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). I believe that Jesus was so successful because He spent a lot of time with the Father in prayer. He understood why He was birthed into the earth and He understood that without constant communications with the Father He would not be able to fulfill His purpose. Because He diligently sought the Father, God proudly announced, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)! Wow!



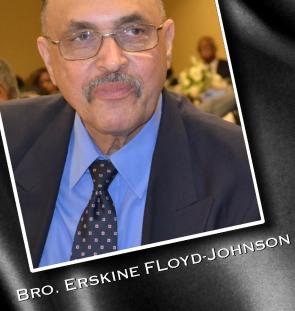
We have but one thing to do and that is "delight ourselves in the Lord". All types of good can come from having a relationship with our Lord. We get VIP status with God. We get a full understanding of who we are and why we are here. If you are struggling with those questions, delighting in the presence of the Lord can be a remedy. We get peace in a storm. Remember, Jesus slept like a baby on the boat through a horrendous sea storm. His disciples woke him up in a panic because they thought they were going to drown. Jesus said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith" (Mark 4:40, NIV)? Jesus silenced the storm for the disciples. This act of love and the many acts of love displayed throughout the Bible and in our everyday lives should be enough for God's people to be committed to a lifestyle of prayer or, simply put, a lifelong relationship with God. At the very least, He deserves it.

Let Us Pray... Father, thank you that you loved us first by choosing us and setting us aside as a holy nation, called by You to proclaim the virtues of The One who called us out of darkness into the marvelous light. To You be honor and glory forever. May we delight in Your presence and be conscious of Your love that we may be filled with the Holy Spirit to have greater victory over sin and greater power for ministry. In Jesus name, Amen.



The memory of the just

is blessed
Proverbs 10:7









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 SERVICES

1st Sunday of Every Month

EVERY WEDNESDAYS

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