the ENCOURAGER magazine October 2022





ON THE COVER

The effervescent and invigorating smile of church pillar and longtime congregant lvy Samuel seems to usher in the merriment of the Christmas season during her photo shoot on December 4, 2022.

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2022

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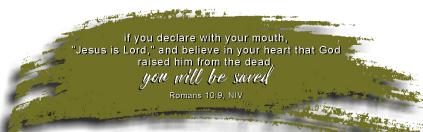
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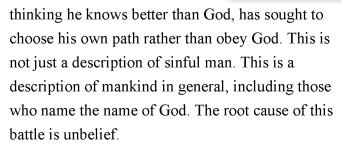
A WORD FROM**THE WORD**PASTOR REGINALD L.ELLIOTT

lt is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might



THE BLESSING OF AFFLICTION

he God/man relationship has been a difficult one to understand from the beginning. That relationship has been marked by a continual battle for control. God has sought to lovingly lead man down a path that brings him into a place of abundant blessings. Man,



We need to remember that there is a reason why believers are called the children of Abraham. Abraham was called by God to leave his homeland and go to a place where God would direct him. The key concept in this call was this – he did not know where he was going other than it was a dwelling place not made by man. The idea of separation from the sinful world he lived in and the belief that his dwelling place would be a place made by God were vital facts that drove him, that directed him.

Abraham and his seed, throughout their lives faced many afflictions, most of which resulted from actions they took that were not consistent with



God's plan. They, like modern believers, failed to recognize the implications of God being both sovereign and loving at the same time. Since they were His people, He was not going to just let them do whatever they wanted for if they did, they would not fulfill His plan for them to be a witness

to the world. He had, through His sovereign will, appointed them a mission and they could not fail. He used affliction as a tool to deal with His people.

God sent prophets to rebuke them, He allowed them to be overrun by other nations, He allowed natural disasters to befall them, all to call them back to Himself. In other words, He put them in the furnace of affliction knowing that in their distress they would call upon Him and He would deliver them.

Affliction/trouble serves a useful purpose in life. All affliction is not because of personal disobedience, don't think that it is. However, regardless of the cause, affliction does cause man to look Godward. Although in the short-term it may produce misery and pain, in the long-term God will make it a blessing. After all, the sovereign and compassionate God of all the earth will always do right. In His sovereign power He will make affliction a blessing. Trust Him.

REVIEW...RENEW...REFRESH

Is we move into a new year, challenges and obstacles have occurred in varying degrees in all our lives. Some started the year with loved ones that are no longer with them. There may have been job losses or financial troubles. Health issues may have developed. God's Word tells us that in our lives, none of us will be without troubles. As human beings there is no way that these negative situations will not come to mind from time to time. But what we must all do is learn to focus on the positives – **the blessings**. Some have experienced new births in their families. There have been new jobs and promotions. New high school and college

graduates have
emerged. Some health
issues have been
resolved, and let us
not forget the basics:
shelter and food on
the table. The list of
blessings can go on
and on. Let's
REVIEW those and
thank God.

Now, how do we **RENEW** after an interruption? How do we restore? I don't

know any other way but to lean on the Lord. The Bible speaks of renewal of mind, spirit, and strength (2 Corinthians 4:16, Ephesians 4:23, Isaiah 40:31, and Psalm 51:10). Meditating on the Word and talking to God often will help in the renewal process. I kept a gratitude journal and wrote down 5 things each day I was thankful for. That helped me get back on a path to renewal in particularly difficult times. Find what works for you. Remember to focus on the blessings – the positives, and you will begin to experience a renewal of mind and spirit.



Although renew and refresh are basically synonyms, in my mind refresh is a little further along the path to restoration.

REFRESH implies the return to that state of mind when you felt happiness, when you felt strength, when you have recovered from that loss. Maybe that vigor for life has finally returned. Staying in a refreshed state requires positive daily activities:

Talk to God daily and often. Thank Him for your renewed strength and spirit.

Get some fresh air daily, if only for a few minutes.

Stay hydrated – most people are chronically dehydrated and that is associated with foggy brains and fatigue.

Be careful about social media addiction

- it can lead to negativity and deplete your energy.

Human touch is important. The pandemic has really limited our comfort level with the essential activity of hugging. Hugs cause a decrease in the release of cortisol, a stress hormone and other research indicates that hugs decrease your



blood pressure and heart rate in stressful situations (Dr. Rock, Cleveland Clinic). If you are not comfortable hugging outside your household, research also shows that hugging a pet or body pillow can have a similar positive effect.

Connect virtually also when you are physically separated from others.

Let us agree to move through 2023 in a refreshed state as much as possible with God's help.

CHRISTIAN COMEDY CORNER CAROLYNJACKSON

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine"

Proverbs 17:22 (KJV)



Cop: What's in the bottle?

Lady: Just some water.

Cop: Ma'am that's wine!

Lady: OMG! Jesus did it again!!

How toprepare Tofu: 1. Throw it in the trash.

2. Grill some meat.

I just did a week's worth of cardio after walking into a spider web.



A recent study has found women who carry a little extra weight live longer thanmen who mention it.

A thief broke into my house last night. He started searching for money so I searched with him.

So, the CIA can hack into my TV and listen to every word I say, but McDonald's can't hear me say, "NO PICKLES" thru their drive-thru speaker?

I ate salad for dinner. Mostly croutons and tomatoes. Really just one big round crouton covered with tomato sauce and cheese. FINE, it was a pizza. I ate a pizza!

Blesssings 2U, Sister Carolyn Jackson Brother Collin Dunlap



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FEATUREDA

remember years ago returning from overseas and being placed in an area of accommodation I would have never imagined. I recall a sweltering hot basement area with jumping cicadas,

dross

noun | DRAHSS

something of low value or quality

crickets, spiders, no windows, boxes stacked to the ceiling, and a small area for a wrought iron futon that I slept on, and that got stepped on by any and all reaching for items beyond the futon. In addition an active drug addict would go through my personal items looking to bank roll their addiction. Another co-habitant worked profusely to make my time, especially my sleep time, a living hell. One room had been turned into two rooms by a makeshift room divider, so every time the ceiling lights turned on or off, it occurred in both rooms. So, at 2am every Monday through Saturday until 5pm at over 100 degrees during the summer months and cold months my door was closed by the co-habitant. With no windows, no air conditioner, and a closed door there was limited breathable air where I laid my head every night for 1-year, 2-months and 16-days.

For more than a year I felt like I'd been placed in a dungeon with foreigners. I never saw it coming. In my eyes it was a mere short visit. It was a visit turned into a planned semi-permanent living condition by someone other than me. Who knew? Yes, only my Sovereign God Himself, determined where I laid my head, and it was He who said "yes" to this dichotomy.

When I sought the Lord, very clearly I heard,

"My child, one thing I ask of you, 'Be still and know that I am God". Knowing God, was cause for pause to NOT lean on my own understanding. I knew enough to know in my mind

my Father had not left me. He is why I awoke every morning yet, in my heart I felt forsaken.

It was during this time I learned how to take stones thrown at me and use them as steppingstones. It is the refining fire of these trials and tribulations that beckoned the dross, the tares that were of NO use to my LORD. It was during this time I was shown by His glory to thrive beyond circumstances, and the compilation of all my experiences that I knew that the dross from my test left testimonies supernaturally inscribed on my heart by the hand of the Most Hight God, Elohim. I was a nobody, and it was time for this nobody to tell everybody who has a heart to hear, eyes to see, and a spirit to receive, the news about a somebody, who loves them more than anybody.

I am forever and eternally thankful, grateful and feeling BLESSED for that furnace of affliction that prayerfully, I never have to revisit because of lessons learned the first time. It was also during this time I spent with my mom whom I love dearly, and my father-in-law who was void of anyone else in the home who would deal with his ailment and colostomy bags that I cherish to this day. Within thirty days both went home to be with the Lord. The wisdom was then, and is now, PRICELESS. Dross begone! Hallelujah!!!



FAMILY FOCUS

n the book *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan the protagonist, Christian, walks through an area called the Valley of the Shadow of Death. It is

described as a very solitary place in which one feels alone, abandoned, isolated. Here, the enemy is more unclear and clandestine. Christian walks in the pitch dark of night on a narrow strip of ground. He must walk on the path straight or he will fall into a deep pit that's on one side or fall into a bog that's on the other side.

Why?

PRAYER

is our
greatest
weapon
Crystal A. Hood

the road is a dreary pass through which the pilgrim, on his journey to Heaven, has to wend his way." Again, I ask why?

to experience troubles that are piled high? Why do we have to walk along a narrow path trying not to fall into a pit or bog? Why do trials seem to come from nowhere and thoughts that are not our own attack our mind?

Why as Christians do we have

This is God's will and way to refine us (Isaiah 48:10). His

amazing glory is manifested as we walk through the wilderness of our life. All of us have horrible periods in which it seems that darkness has engulfed us, but when daylight comes we see clearly how He protected us. We also see how He can carry us through the snares ahead.

The glory of God is in Jesus. He is our light, "There it was—the true Light [the genuine, steadfast Light] which, coming into the world, enlightens everyone" John 1:9(AMP). If we are to find peace and hope in this life, as we face the darkness of this world, we must find Christ in His Word.

As Christian journeys there are horrible sounds all around and the enemy is whispering blasphemes in his ear. His mind becomes confused. The thoughts, that he thinks are his, are against God in such a way that he begins to doubt his own testimony. Bunyan states that in order for Christian to correctly head toward the Celestial City (Heaven) "he must need" go through this place.

Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon titled "The Valley of the Shadow of Death" that is based on Psalm 23. He stated about the valley, "Troubles are sometimes heaped on one another, pile on pile, and

In the story, Christian had learned the importance of relying on God's Word. He had learned to wield it like a sword, but as things worsened he resorted to a greater weapon in spiritual warfare – ALL PRAYER (Ephesians 6:18). He cried out to the Lord with the words of Psalm 116:4, "Then I called on the name of the LORD: 'O LORD, deliver my soul'" (BSB)!

Prayer is our greatest weapon. Humbly crying out to God, through Jesus, during our distress sustains us, protects us, revives our spirit and brings spiritual deliverance. Thoughts, that are not our thoughts, take effort to be removed from our head. Prayer changes our heart and mind so that we can become more receptive to hearing God's voice through His Word.

In our wilderness the enemy may whisper in our ear that we are alone, our struggles are unique, no one can understand, and no one can help. That is a lie. Daily, multitudes of people, including myself, have emotional and mental battles due to health, family life, world events, etc.

Our path at times can be dark and uncertain, but it is God's will and purpose that we walk such paths and learn more deeply to trust Him. Though the way may be clouded and unclear, we must press on

to glory. Though we may not be able to see even where our next footstep will land, God is faithful and He will lead us safely home. In Christ there is life and light. In Christ we have nothing to fear. He is our strength and salvation. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Ephesians 6:10, KJV).

Resource: Ken Puls- Commentary on Pilgrim's Progress.



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here is a popular hymn of which these words are a major theme: This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long. You often hear about song writers who are inspired to write a song, but hear this story of a song written in the heart, not with pen or ink, but with mercy and grace. I was recently blessed to speak with Ivy Samuel. She lives in Columbia Maryland, with her husband Rodney Samuel. They have two adult daughters, Samantha, and Naeomi.

Linwood Childs (LC): Ivy, how long have you lived in Columbia?

Ivy Samuel (IS): Well over 30 years. We're originally from Grenada, born and raised. Ivy is actually my middle name and my grandmother's first name. Since Ivy is easier for people to pronounce it stuck. Once I got my US citizenship, it just stayed that way, its Ivy Veronica, with surname Julien. We grew up in the Catholic Church, and I worked in office administration where they handled all the birth records. Now, my father disowned me as a child. Now to tell you the truth, I hated his guts. Now I asked the father the priest, to change the information and from that point I carry my mother's last name. So, on the island when you have illegitimate children, the children take the name of the father. My father's last name is Cyrus. So I changed my name to Julien, my mother's last

name because I did not want to carry his name. Because he claimed that I was not his child. But his mother when she saw me asked, "Who was your father?" She said, "No, I know you're my grandchild!" Imagine that, right?

LC: Wow, you've really come through some challenges.

IS: Yes. A lot! But you know, the thing about it is, way back then I hated God. I used to call Him all kind of names. Mostly because when I came up, nobody wanted me. My mother didn't want me, my father didn't want me. I was angry as a teenager and beyond – I was angry for a long time.

LC: I could see how you would be.

IS: You see, when I look back now, I see that God had a hand in it. You know what I mean.

LC: Right.

IS: There was a cousin, but I didn't know then that he was my cousin because he was just a very young child.

In Grenada, when I was young, I remember I was just playing with this very young kid in this pasture, this field. The child's mother saw how much I loved kids and loved taking care of him. So, she talked to me and talked to my mom. So, she asked if I wanted to stay with her and take care of the (Continued on Page 11)

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reason

Ivy Samuel





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little guy. Well, the fact of the matter was my mom jumped at the opportunity. So, the child's mother, told me that I could come and visit. And before I knew it, I started to live with her. I had to be only about 12 years old, 12 or 13. So my mother kind of pushed me off to live with these people. So, what I came to know later was that this was my father's mistress. So, we were related.

I obviously didn't know any of this then. But I started visiting them, staying over, and before I knew I was living there. So, what I came to know later was that this woman was my father's mistress. So, we were technically, related.

LC: Oh, wow!

IS: So, God's hand was still in all of that. Now the boy was very successful in school and went on to graduate. He was teaching at the secondary school, but always wanted to be a doctor. So, he came to the US. When he got settled, he remembered me and sent for me, so I could come to the US. That's how I came to live in the US from Grenada. I can look back now and say that was the Lord working for me.

LC: Wow, you talk about how the Lord is awesome. God can move and you not even know he's moving. And moving in your favor!

IS: You're absolutely right. It was like one thing after the other, God just placed the rights things, or connections before me, even before I knew it. Basically, I used to work as a cop, in my country. After I graduated, from high school I applied to the police force, working in the criminal investigation unit. I was young, so from age 19 – 21. I worked with the detail that went around with the Governor General of Grenada. But when they had a major

change in the government, they put me in the

immigration department. It was there that I realized that I could get papers to travel such as a passport,

without anybody knowing it because I was working

in that office. So, I applied for it and didn't say

anything to anyone.





It just so happened that as soon as I got the passport, I was transferred to another enforcement office outside of that office of immigration but at the airport. While I was there, I got to know the Commissioner of Police, because the Immigration Department was right next to the police. So, after the move to the airport, I called him and let him know I needed a couple of days to go to see my ill grandmother in Barbados. I didn't tell anybody what I was really doing. At that time, Ward Bishop was the Attorney General of the island. He was also

my attorney and all the legal immigration documents for Grenada had to go through

Barbados. So, he helped me. I went to pick up my documents and came back to work in Grenada and was set. I never said anything to anyone. Then I left Grenada under a student visa and went to the US, landing in New York, but living in Washington, DC. Once I got to the US, then I resigned my position in Grenada. Back then the Grenada government they weren't letting anyone leave because the country was in such a political uproar and many in the government were corrupt. So, I did all of this and didn't say anything to anybody. The only ones who knew were my lawyer, the Attorney General, my aunt who help me get the papers together, and my cousin and his wife who lived in Washington, DC. I lived with them for long time.

LC: Wow that's a lot. Were you young then, were you fearful or anxious about leaving?

IS: I was not fearful. I just needed something different. I never really thought about it because I had such a horrible upbringing, you know – father who disowned you and a mother who didn't want you. Even before I graduated high school my mom left the island, things were that bad. And I could not think but that may be why she pawned me off so she could escape.

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Now my mother was the only dark-skinned member of her family, all the others were called in our culture Grenada-white (blond hair, blue eyes, etc.) – you would not believe they were in the same family, but her family treated her like a Cinderella, treated her just horribly.

My aunt was the youngest, but she really helped me. She tried to make up for what her sister and her family had done. When I was leaving high school and began training at the police academy in Grenada this aunt gave me a place to live. Here's the good thing, my aunt treated me well. Now her children and I keep regular contact with each other. When I first came stateside, I waited a couple of months before even telling anybody where I was.

The reason being I wanted to make sure that my resignation went through at the police force first!

LC: So finally arriving here in the US must have been a real relief to you, and a load off your shoulders?

IS: Well, yes, but back then I was I was angry, an angry young woman. The old me, huh, I would curse you out in a minute. I remember people saying, "You don't want to mess with Ivy." Huh, I will go to parties, and fight like a man.

LC: You would cut loose on them!

IS: Yeah, they said I was a bad Mama Jama! Oh, yes.

ife was hard and I was angry
for a long, long time...to
tell me that God loves
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none of
that
Ivy Samuel







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He wanted to somehow repay to me the kindness my father had shown to him. My cousin would have been kicked out of the prestigious boy's school in shame, had the truth been know about who his father was. So, my father encouraged my cousin and my aunt to relocate to the US, and setting them up to live well here.

I quickly learned that life has turns. You never know where it's going to lead you.

LC: As a young person, was the travel or going to a new place concerning to you?

IS: No. I was around Grenadians all the time. There were a lot of Grenadians already in the Washington, DC area, and my cousin knew *a lot* of people. Plus you had the Grenadian culture around you all the time.

LC: Yes, that makes a huge difference. Do you remember when you first got your license to drive in the US.

IS: (laughing). Rodney *tried* to teach me how to drive a stick shift. Driving through, of all places, hilly Rock Creek Park. I said no, no, no! Rodney tried to teach me but it just would not work. At one point I just put the car in park and got out. And

said, "No you are not going to be able to teach me how to drive"

His cousin, Ken, I asked him to teach me because I could not learn from Rodney! Besides he has an automatic shift. So, I finally, got my license.

LC: At various times, it can be good to look back and realize what the Lord has brought you through.

IS: Yes, things that you went through that you were not able to see then – like, you see them now. You look at them one way while you're in it, but then another looking back. As you get older, and the Lord opens up your eyes you see things differently.

I used to sell a lot of things as a way to make money, like Tupperware and Princess House. I was selling while going to school. I had a show in SE Washington. Just before the show started, a man called the house and cursed at me and said I'm going to kill you. I think Rodney and I were married by then, and so we called the police. The DC police said ma'am I can do nothing for you. But as God is my witness, the officer asked me this question, "Do you know Jesus?"

I said, "Yes, I go to church." Rodney and I were still deciding which church we were going to. It



was a few months later that I was talking to Deloris, I don't remember her last name. She was the manager of the group we were in who was selling Princess House crystal. There was a lady there, who didn't say anything, but I knew she was different. Rosalie Day. We have been working together for months and then one day she said to me, "Ivy, look at places in Columbia." We were looking for a new neighborhood since ours was changing and overwhelming us, we didn't like that. She was on me for months to look at a place in Columbia. I finally did, but thought it was too far. She told me everything to do. But nothing was moving. She said I have some friends in Columbia and I want you to reach out to them. I agreed. But you will never believe who these people were.

LC: Okayyyy, who were they?

IS: Frank and Betty King.

LC: Oh, awesome.

IS: I've known Frank and Betty for over 30 years. It was just one thing after another, and Betty said, "You need to go to church!" That's how I was introduced to CCC at the Slayton House.

LC: You know that was nothing but God.

IS: Nothing but!

LC: You cannot even imagine how God does things. He had that under control!

IS: I don't even try any longer to figure out how God does what He does. He had that under control. He was there in all the trials and tribulations; he was there all the time. I remember the outfit I was wearing on my first visit to CCC. I had never heard preaching like that. I grew up in the Catholic church. Rodney grew up in a different part of the island and knew more about the Christianity part of it, and he always wanted to serve God. Now while we are in DC we went to the Episcopalian church because that's where we got married. I still remember what I wore the first time I came to our first service. When we walked in there I had on black culottes with a red top. Frances Barnes was ushering and greeted us. She asked, "Who are these mountain people coming in here?"

God had me on a journey. I knew nothing of God's Word. I knew nothing about God. I was trying to get over the fact that I had cursed God out, so many times for all the trauma in my life. I *knew* I was going to hell. With all the things that had happened to me as a girl, stuff that I wouldn't tell anybody, even molested by family members. Life was hard *(Continued on Page 17)*



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and I was angry, for a long, long, time. So for you to tell me that God loves me, I really didn't want to hear none of that. I was trying to forgive the people who had done so much to me but that was a journey all by itself. But it was kind of rough. And just around that time, my oldest brother was dying and his wife was giving him a hard way to go. It was a lot at that time.

Adrian Spencer—I'll never forget her. She was sick and Eddie Keels and I used to take turns taking care of her because she had the baby. And that's when I found out about that I was diabetic and didn't even know it. But I knew something was wrong, but I didn't know what it was. And I wasn't paying attention. I was always a healthy eater, one thing it did was, I lost weight along the way. So, I didn't pay attention because of all that was going on, but I was happy because I was losing weight. Until one day I was coming up route 95, and all of sudden I couldn't see anything. My vision got blurry. Well, they tested me for everything, and they found out that I was diabetic. It did a lot of damage by then because I wasn't paying it any attention.

LC: how did you feel about it once you knew what it was?

IS: I was kinda okay because my biological father had diabetes; it ran on that side of the family. It was kind of rough but being able to get the right

medication helped me. I was able to change my eating habits and get back to better eating like I had back when we lived in DC. Then rather than drive we walked almost everywhere. Now, I was okay living with it, monitoring it. There was a lot of damage to my body. Lesson learned: You must take responsibility for your life.

Back then you didn't have the Internet access to a lot of information and you kind of accepted whatever was told you. Also, what I remember was, that we used to use a lot of home remedies we called bush, they call it herbs in the US. But we use all types of bush, for different types of ailments.

LC: What happened next?

couldn't figure out what was going on. I got this thing that looked like a pimple on my back. I went to my doctor, and I showed him. I told him it doesn't look right. So, I finally decided to go to the hospital, called the doctor and told him we were going to the hospital and have them take a look at it. So, we went and this real big, tall guy, came into the room, I figured he was from South Africa by his accent, he walked in the room and asked, "Are you the cancer patient?" I told him no, that you have the wrong room. Afterward they checked results against all kinds of diseases. After looking at the blood and my white platelet count, they decided to test and realized I had leukemia. And because my



platelet counts had dropped so bad, I had to be immediately admitted. So, *they* couldn't find an available bed at the time, so they finally took me to University of Maryland. So, they officially said yes, I have AML, Acute Myeloid Leukemia. I said, okay. It's amazing because God was all in this. On the hospital wing in which I was, there were six women all who also had leukemia. We kept in touch with each other as we each went through treatments.

After they ran tests and exams, they concluded I needed to have a bone marrow transplant, but because of where I was born, the bone marrow donors were coming back with only a 10% match. In order to find a good donor, the most likely person would be a sibling from the same mother and same father. But I did not have that. I had four brothers and sisters all of them were from different fathers. The only good thing was we had the same mother. But they told us there was nothing they could do for us.

So, I settled down to enjoy what time I might have left. I know you've seen me with a black-and-white necklace that has tiger stripes on it. Naeomi and I went shopping at that time and she selected it, but I asked, "Why would I get that since I'm gonna die in a few months?" Naeomi said, "Mom don't talk

like that." I said, "Well, it's true." She said, "Well I'm buying it." I said, "When I die you can have it." Meanwhile we kept looking for a donor. So, in the meantime now three of the other women in my first group have passed away. One of the daughters of my cancer group called me. I asked her how was her mother? She said, "That's why I'm calling you. Mom passed away." Well, you could have knocked me over with a feather because this lady had the transplant, and she ended up dying. I felt as though I heard the Lord saying do not go to that funeral. So, I did not go. Then, another one of the ladies died.

Then I got sick one day. I wanted this chicken burrito. I could hear clearly the Lord saying don't eat it, but I wanted that burrito so bad, so I ate it and I got sick as a dog! I ended up in the hospital, there was some sort of bacteria in the chicken, and I got very sick. I was so sick I couldn't even hold up my head. The doctors came into my room to discuss my case because he wanted to give me a certain medication. There was one lady doctor, she was a Fellow and she said to him, "Don't give Ms. Ivy that medication." He did not appreciate her saying that, at least in front of me. So, I refused to take the medicine. A little later I asked a nurse on the floor to give me a print-out of the interactions of that medication that the doctor wanted me to (Continued on Page 19)



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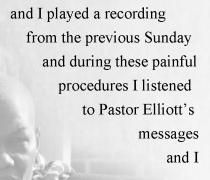
take. I felt that in my heart that's what I needed to do, and when I read it I knew right away that I was right in not taking that medication that he prescribed. When my doctor came the next morning, he asked me how I was feeling. First thing I said was, "I did not take the medicine and I'm not going take that medicine because I'm on another medication and there is an interaction with that medication that will make me much sicker than I am." He said to me, "I guess you are a very informed patient." And I said, "Yes, I guess I am, kinda sort of." So, he ended up prescribing the same medication that the female doctor recommended to him the day before.

Rodney was very concerned and not happy with what was going on and he said, to the doctors, "You are going to have to change all this medication, you're killing my wife." At the time, I did not know he was doing this at all; this was going in the background. The bottom line is, or was, there was nothing more they could do for me. They went to the donor bank but could not find anyone in the donor bank for me.

But God. The lady doctor that suggested the proper medication came to me and suggested I talk to a doctor, a researcher at Johns Hopkins, before I took any other medication. This was in 2011 and there is basically nothing they could do – I was basically

sitting around waiting for death to come knocking. So, she called her husband who called the researcher. This doctor, who is a major researcher at Johns Hopkins, called me. He met with the four of us, Rodney, me, Samantha and Naeomi. He developed a protocol that required only *one* parental match in order to make the bone marrow transplant treatment work. So, after testing everyone close to me, they decided my brother was the best match. To recap, the first cycle of treatment 2006, worked, sort of, and it went into remission but came back five years later. That's when this treatment was used, in 2011. So, it was in 2017 that this doctor said he doesn't usually say this to patients, but he said I think you're cured! That was in 2017.

There were months of repeated bone marrow aspirations that I had to go through to verify the procedure was working. It was a very, very painful needle insertion directly into the bone. You feel this throughout your entire body. But it's extremely important that you stay still. One doctor, who performed the procedure, was amazed that I kept my composure so well, stayed calm and remained still during the entire procedure. I didn't even move. Later, I mentioned to Pastor Elliott that I was listening to him during those treatments, but I don't think he realized exactly what it really meant. Right before each needle aspiration, I took my recorder



tell you, I didn't move. The doctor who did the needle biopsy wanted to know what I was listening to because he knew men that cried out in anguish in this procedure. He knew how difficult and painful the procedure was. They actually have to straddle you and drill through your spinal bone, it sounds like a sledgehammer drilling through concrete.

I have to tell you one of the things that got me through is this scripture, every day I read these verses, Psalms 118:15-18. "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over to death" (Psalm 118:15-18, KJV). Keep God's Word in the forefront of your thoughts!

So then, I have tried to tell everyone that I can to take better care of themselves. If you know to do better, then do better. Sometimes they don't appreciate it but I tell them anyway.

LC: Any remaining challenges, oh yes.

IS: It's hard to speak about what the Lord has done, because so many people recall a dear family (*Continued on Page 21*)

member who had the same thing but died. Why did I make it through. I know life and death is in the hands of God, but I would feel guilty about being alive. I'm sorry you lost you mom, cousin or others. All I can say is that God has me here for a reason. I don't know, but I'm living by best life!!

say that. I discerned years ago, that you had reached a point of casting off the anxiety that others get caught up in. Anxiety that destroys your body and spirit. You seem to have said to God, come what may, I'm in the Lord's hand. The monkey is off my back. But that meant you would peacefully do what glorifies Him.

IS: My life, my whole life, it's in Him. Forgiveness is so important! People see you and don't know the horror that God has brought you through.

LC: What challenges remain?

IS: Diabetic Neuropathy, sciatica, stage 3B kidney disease. I have learned not to eat things that are harmful to my body. A lot of natural things that work, keeping my A1C down, kidney function up.



When I see something natural that can help someone, I tell them. The whole thing is managing your health.

The doctor cannot do it all. You have to take primary responsibility. For instance, we don't eat after 7pm, and we eat a lot of vegetables.

Look where He's brought me from. In life you see people, but you still do not know the journey that they've been through. I know that I'm in the Lord's hand, I was *content* if I lived or died. "You don't know what He's done for me, gave me the victory!"

LC: Thanks, for the courage to share so many good and difficult things. The words of a precious song, "God Leads His Dear Children Along", comes to mind, "Some through the water, some through the flood, some through the fire, but all through the blood. And some through great sorrow, but God gives the song in the night season and all the day long". It is God that is with us.



THELIBRARIAN'S DESK

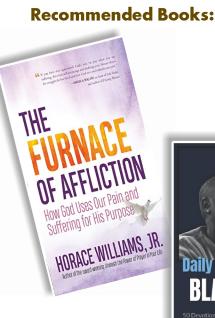
ow apropos...this just got very personal. When I was lying on my bed of affliction recently, and in such excruciating and debilitating pain that I cried out to the Father, that He could "just take me," just so the pain could stop – talk about being humbled. We all have experienced afflictions in our life (if you haven't, keep living), we all have our testimonies to share, and we all have our crosses to bear. God has no respect of persons. "For there is no respect of persons with God" (Romans 2:11, KJV).

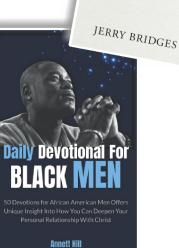
The dictionary defines affliction as "something that causes pain or suffering". Whereas spiritual affliction can be viewed as "an extreme form of suffering that also transcends suffering". Affliction can be a profound life altering encounter with the Father...I know mine was. "Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:21, KJV).

When you are lying on your bed of affliction and it's just you and God, the isolation and disengagement from everyday life and distractions enabled me to "go deep"...to peel back the layers within myself...to introspect. If allowed, God will reveal your deepest and darkest self to yourself. He will also reveal His agape love for you in ways that only the spirit man in you can comprehend. While I was being "stilled" by God, He opened up my eyes so that I could see and my ears so that I could hear, and more importantly listen to what He wanted to show and tell me about myself. It helped me to get my house in order and my priorities straight. In a word, my furnace of affliction became a blessing

for my life. Because I was forced "still", I meditated and dwelled on His Word intently and the Lord allowed me to experience the glory of His majesty. It gave purpose, value and meaning to my anguish. It challenged me to view my infirmity as a gift... that took some doing – only then could I find meaning in my pain and suffering. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John 11:4, KJV).

When you are "going through" something it is imperative to surrender it to God so that it may bear fruit. Trust in God's providence and know that He is allowing it for a reason and a purpose. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1, KJV). Fix your eyes on God.





 $\Gamma RUSTING$

GOD

WAGING WAR THROUGH PRAYER
UNLOCKS YOUR BLESSINGS
LET USPRAY
ANGELAHUNT BONITTO

page 23 the ENCOURAGER magazine

Anytime we are in the fiery furnace spiritual warfare is our way out! 1 Corinthians 10:13, tells us we WILL be tested but we WILL be given a way out when tested. So why do so many of us complain and fold through the test? I believe sometimes we can get so caught up in our trials that we forget that we serve a God who cares about us and everything we go through.

We live in a world that is spiritual and physical. When we pray, we are allowing room so that the spiritual can work in us God's good plan for us (from the beginning of time, God intended good for us - when God made man, He looked upon Him and said he is good). After He made Eve, He told them to dominate the earth and rule over it. It is your right, your heritage to enjoy all that the earth has for you. However, it is important to understand that that good life does not come without trials. God gave us prayer to overcome those trials. Prayer shouldn't just be an afterthought. It is an opportunity to go in a supernatural space and command it for our own good and the good of others. We can do battle in prayer; we can get a release in prayer; we can change situations and circumstances in prayer.

The prophet Daniel prayed 21 days because the Jews were having trouble rebuilding the temple. God heard Daniel's prayer, but the answer was held up by Satan and his minions. When Daniel was about to give up an angel came and said he would have been there earlier, but he was detained for twenty-one days by "the prince of the kingdom of Persia," which is Satan. We do not see the warfare that wages in the spiritual realm, but according to this there are fierce battles in which Satan and his forces try to disrupt the will of God. But, ultimately, we see that what we say is enforceable in the realm of the spirit.

What Scripture teachers about Daniel's experience is interesting, but what does it say to us? The Bible says wealth and riches shall be in your house. Prayer releases those things to you. It unlocks your portion and provides opportunity for you to gain what is yours now!! However, there is a "but". We must have a relationship with Christ—no relationship, no blessing. I'll say it again. No relationship, no blessing. God desires a relationship with us. Let's intentionally engage with Jesus to build that relationship that He desires. Let's not wait but let us do it now!

Let Us Pray...

Father God, this day we make the decision to spend more time with You getting to know You and Your will for our lives so that You will unlock our blessings and endow us with power to change things and circumstances. Thank you, Father, for patiently waiting for us to wake up and come to You for fellowship so that we can effectively carry out Your plans on earth. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen!

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR



Wedding Anniversary

NOVEMBER 2022

REGINALD & JUANITA ELLIOTT



ON THEINSIDE COVERS

Inside Front: Pastor Reginald Elliott humbly accepts a congregational gift for Pastor Appreciation on October 30, 2022.

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2022

Inside Back: Congratulatory keepsake photo of Pastors Reginald & Juanita Elliott in recognition of their admirable 56th Wedding Anniversary.

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2022

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 WEDNESDAY:

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

1st & 3rd WEDNESDAYS:

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

GENERAL INFORMATION

CARE & COMFORT MINISTRY

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