



# the ENCOURAGER magazine

July 2023



## JARS of CLAY

COLUMBIA COMMUNITY CHURCH



## ON THE COVER

Mother-daughter duo and long-time congregants Yvette and Camille Strawder lovingly share the spotlight during their photoshoot on 09/24/23.

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2023





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## THE MAGAZINE **STAFF** Jul 2023

### **PASTORS**

Rev. Reginald L. Elliott, Pastor  
Juanita Elliott, Assistant Pastor  
Min. Linwood Childs, Assistant Pastor

### **EDITOR**

Michael R. Spry

### **GRAPHIC DESIGN & PRINTING**

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

### **WRITERS**

Assistant Pastor 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 Manoke  
Min. Michael Manoke  
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](http://www.columbiaccmd.org)

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## A WORD FROM **THE WORD**

PASTOR REGINALD L. ELLIOTT

*"But we have this*

*treasure in  
earthen vessels,*

*that the excellency  
of the power may  
be of God, and  
not us."*

2 Corinthians 4:7, KJV



## VESSELS OF CLAY

**I**n 2 Corinthians 4:7 we are described as earthen vessels, i.e., vessels of clay. Scripture repeatedly reminds us of the vast difference between God and man, a truth that affects our everyday lives in so many ways.

This truth has the power to strengthen or weaken our faith as we seek to live for God. The glory that touches our lives comes from God, belongs to God, and must be attributed to God alone and not to something we have done.

God is God and man is a being created by God. Genesis 2:7 says


God used the dirt from the earth to form man and then breathed into man His own life making man a living soul. Even before sin entered the world, God was God and man was man. After sin entered the world and created a barrier between God and man, the distinction between God and man became more pronounced. It became more obvious that God was still God and man was a flawed vessel of clay. Even after we accept Jesus as Savior, and our standing before God becomes based on the perfection of Jesus, we are still imperfect vessels of clay.

However, because God is God, He chooses to put His Spirit in and let His glory shine through these

imperfect vessels of clay. He begins a process called sanctification in which He begins to perfect the likeness of His Son in our lives. As He works, the excellency of His power starts to manifest itself

in and through us and others begin to see it. When that starts to happen, we must not seek to exalt ourselves but acknowledge it is God at work

in our lives. We are still imperfect vessels of clay but God is transforming us by His power.

As we exercise faith, we must always remember that everything we seek can only be provided by God. Many lose faith because they do not see how what they are believing for can happen because they think they must do something to make it happen. Remember you are but a vessel made by Him, He alone has the power to make all things happen. Look only to Him to perform what you desire; your faith must be in Him. He is the one who puts treasures in vessels of clay. God and God alone is the only one who can make earthen vessels shine with His glory. 





# VOICES in my head

FEATURED **POEM**  
KIM ODOMS-BOLDEN

The voices in my head  
Trampled my mind and said  
You who's made of clay don't try  
You'll crumble and die  
Will I buckle at what could've, would've,  
should've been?  
Fear hidden within  
Was safely tucked beneath my grin  
Not allowed to veil my face  
This clay had no place for masquerade

Doubt cannot destruct  
What God constructs  
The fear within  
Cannot weaken  
What God strengthens  
Praising Jesus ALL the way through  
This jar of clay! Who knew?  
Might crack but would not bend  
This mortar transcends  
Darts  
From near and afar

The voices in my head  
Trampled my mind and said  
You'll never succeed  
More than mere brickwork I will not be sieged  
Within this jar of clay is hidden treasure  
Filled with God's surpassing Power



He is the Potter that has the right  
To mold as He likes  
For common or special purposes  
In Him I will trust

Thousands join the voices in my head  
Trampling my mind and said  
You are a failure  
But God's "timing" built to endure  
Others said, it cannot be done  
This jar of clay could not possibly be the one  
To live to see faith run  
Its course of tribulation  
It's His Word I grasp and hold  
In the end this clay emulates pure gold  
In the Potter's hand  
Nothing circumvents God's sovereign plan  
I am the clay in the Potter's hand  
Molded and made to withstand







## THE LIBRARIAN'S DESK


DESIREE COLLINS

May I be transparent? I didn't know what to do with this theme, "Jars of Clay". I didn't have an inkling of what it meant, let alone how I was going to write about it. Sure, I knew that God formed us from clay, but where do I go from this point? So I studied, prayed, meditated, and asked the Father to give me direction and clarity on what to write and what He would have me to say.

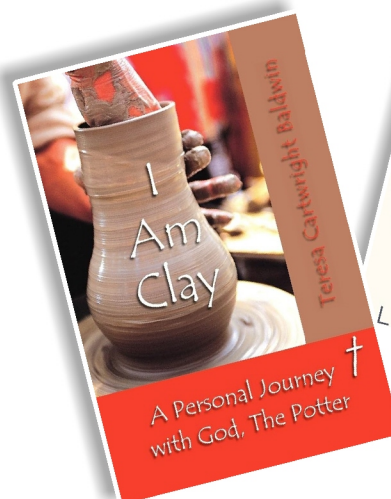
**"But now, O Lord, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand" (Isaiah 64:8, NKJV).**

God created us from His image, made from clay, vessels of the Earth if you will... know that God is the Potter and allow Him to shape and mold us into His perfect will. When we allow ourselves to be open to God's will in our lives He will mold, shape, transform and sanctify us as He sees fit. As sanctification is a transformative process, we need to come to the Father in humble submission, leaving self and pride at the door. Just as a potter needs water to make the clay pliable, Jesus, the "Living Water" needs the same pliability from us. And how do we become pliable and shapeable? By spending time in His Word and being obedient to His Word and His Will.

Think about all the things that are happening in your life right now...the good, bad and the ugly. Those situations and circumstances are being used to mold, shape, break and refine us for His perfect will. In 2 Timothy 2:21, the apostle Paul tells us that God wants to form us into a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master. This requires us to be 100% yielded to Jesus by surrendering ourselves completely, fully centered in Him. Jesus must be both our Lord and Savior. Jesus' ultimate goal is for us to fulfill the divine destiny He has called for each of us. "I am the Vine, you are the branches; He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, NASB).

Never forget God is the Creator and we are the creation! 

### Recommended Books:





# EARTHEN VESSELS and the GLORY OF GOD

FAMILY FOCUS  
CRYSTAL A. HOOD

*H*ave you ever done something really stupid and sat back wondering, “Why did I let that happen?” Be thankful for this revelation. Be thankful for wanting to kick yourself and wishing you had a reset button that would let you have a do over. Why do I say this? The Bible tells us that we are jars of clay; unworthy earthen vessels of human frailty, but “...God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ’” (2 Corinthians 4:6-7, NIV).

God knows that we are going to get it wrong and we are going to make mistakes. God created the family structure (spouse, parent, child, siblings, etc.). He knows that Satan uses these relationships to derail us away from His will. It is our humanness, our moments of disobedience, our sin that allows God’s glory and grace to shine through us. Rejoice in the times when you realize that you were dumb and give God the praise because He gives us the power to overcome our foolish ways. Does this mean that we should just be stupid and practice disobedience to God (sin) as a habit, so God will be glorified? Absolutely not (Romans 6:1-2, AMP)!

**G O D   K N O W S**  
that we are going to  
get it wrong and we  
are going to make  
mistakes...

*Crystal A. Hood*



The Holy Spirit states through Paul, for “...just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory and power of the Father, we too might walk habitually in newness of life [abandoning our old ways]” (Romans 6:4, AMP). In order to really walk habitually in our new self we need to see our old ways as dead, buried and gone (Romans 7:18). We do not naturally have a God-like mind, although through Jesus, God has placed His Spirit in us. We still have a heart geared toward lifting up ourselves. God said, if “...My people, who are called by My Name, humble themselves, and pray and seek (crave, require as a necessity) My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear [them] from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14, AMP). If we feel we are justified in our thoughts, actions and speech with minimal spiritual filter, our heart is not humbled. A humbled heart starts with surrendering to God’s will.




**"BE  
THANKFUL**  
for wanting to  
kick  
yourself and  
wishing  
you had a reset  
button..."

*CRYSTAL A. HOOD*

I had a situation in which I was not in the wrong, but I was not helpful. I did not respond according to the urging of the Holy Spirit and things went unnecessarily badly. I sought forgiveness from God first; for my sin of disobedience was to Him first. Then I apologized to those involved. I did this because peace was better. The Holy Spirit teaches us to "Pursue peace with everyone, as well as holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14, BSB). Apologizing was hard to do, but afterward the Holy Spirit gave me His peace and joy. In order to keep that experience in my heart I had to continue to strive in surrender to

God's will, and push back my flesh that wanted to explain or be validated.

We are merely earthen vessels with nothing of value in us, but God chose that through faith in Jesus, He would give us His light. God placed "...this treasure in jars of clay to show that this surpassingly great power is from [Him, His sufficiency] and not from us"(2 Corinthians 4:7, BSB). Our acts of stupidity do not honor God. It is seeing our stupidity, seeking His forgiveness and turning from our disobedience that allows His light to shine out of the darkness of our heart; then He is glorified. 



## PERKS FOR HEALTHY FALLEATING

CAROLYN FLEMING, RN

**E**very season has a uniqueness and beauty that God has given it. Most of us have a favorite season, and whether you like the changing colors of fall, the cold crisp air of a winter day, the new birth of spring, or the warmth of a summer day, God's handiwork is seen in all seasons.

As we enter fall, there is a bounty of benefits in seasonal fall foods. The following health benefits have been compiled from the Cleveland Clinic and the USDA.

**Apples** come to mind for most of us when we think of fall fruits. They contain an abundance of fiber and Vitamin C. Keeping the skin on the apple is best because the skin contains polyphenols (flavonoids). Harvard School of Public Health and The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, states that polyphenols contribute to lowering the risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, repair lung damage from smoking, and lower the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

**Pears** have even more fiber than apples. They also contain Vitamin C and potassium. Potassium is vital for cell function, regulating your heart and keeping your muscles and nerves working properly.

**Cranberries** also contain fiber and Vitamin C.



The American Heart Association calls cranberries a heart healthy food that may improve blood pressure and cholesterol.

**Winter Squash** are actually harvested in the fall, and are loaded with beta-carotene (Vitamin A), magnesium, potassium, and fiber. According to the NIH (National Institutes of Health), Vitamin A is beneficial for immunity and eye health, and is important to maintain the heart, lungs, and kidneys.

**Pumpkins** are also a good source of Vitamin A. We often only think of carving them for fall harvest decorations, but pumpkins can be used in muffins, pancakes, oatmeal, and a number of other fall recipes.

**Leeks** are a milder alternative to onions. They are high in flavonoids, contributing to heart health, and a good source of antioxidants which help prevent eye disease according to the American Optometric Association.




**Brussel Sprouts** are full of fiber and antioxidants. In addition to boiling and steaming them, they can be roasted, if you prefer them crispy rather than mushy.

**Sweet Potatoes** are loaded with Vitamins A and C, increasing the benefit of immunity for your body.

**Parsnips** provide Vitamin K which helps your blood to clot and keeps your bones healthy. Parsnips also contain folate which, for women looking to become pregnant or are pregnant, is vital for good fetal development.

**Broccolis**, along with **Cauliflowers** are abundant in the fall and perfect for steaming, roasting or added to stir-fries. They also contain a cancer-fighting compound called sulforaphane. Take advantage of the Fall bounty. God has given us the fall season to restore and repair after the hot summer.

**One verse of a poem called "Autumn Blessings" by Deborah Beka says:**

God gave us the Autumn season,  
So we could have a respite and rest  
For it is the season for our beset souls  
To see how much we are blessed! 



YVETTE & CAMILLE

# Strawder

## GETTING TO KNOW

ASSISTANT PASTOR LINWOOD



**G**od used the Apostle Paul to instruct and encourage the saints in Corinth and beyond that believers in God have invested in our human frame a priceless treasure. A treasure so great that we may be tempted to devalue it because of the troubles and trials we face in life. God has commanded His light to shine through our darkness to give the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. It was mine to speak with mom and daughter, Yvette and Camille Strawder, about their witness to their God's treasure.

**Linwood Childs (LC):** So many things going on until some can wonder: Lord, where are you?

**Yvette Strawder (YS):** Also on the opposite end of that so many things can happen that amaze you that you are left with "Wow Lord. Yes, Your word is true Lord." He is there even in the smallest of things.

**LC:** So, we don't have to have a miracle every day to know that God is with us.

**YS:** That is true. I have experienced that many times. And it always amazes me. One example, I was looking for something in Walmart. Don't laugh, a particular swim cap. But I couldn't find it; I needed it to protect my hair coloring I had put in a

couple of days previously. I was looking up and down the aisles where I thought it was located, and still not seeing it – only seeing the tags advertising it. I said, "Oh well, Lord, if there is a sun cap to be found in the store would you please direct me to it? Please." I kid you not, I turned right around and looked right at it! The only one left. I pulled it up, and then looked up and said, "Thank you God."

**LC:** There you go! It's the little things, isn't that good?

**YS:** Yes, that is awesome. It's a small thing but, yes, God did it.

**LC:** He watches over us every day and wants us to communicate with Him even over the little things. But it's a learning process with a learning curve as well. God often starts with the little things. There is a peace that *God* gives you and all those who seek to *simply* trust Him. You've been through a lot. When you do go through with God's help, you will exhibit a growing peace. It is not mere human knowledge or human strength, or human will that gets us through.

**Camille Strawder (CS):** No, it's prayer; knowing that I have no strength at all! My strength was spent a long time ago. And I will, 100% rely  
(Continued on Page 11)



*I* have  
seen  
unbelievers  
**go through  
the same  
situations**  
but they go  
through in a way  
that seems  
hopeless

*Yvette Strawder*







on my strength *from* God! The Lord continuously keeps feeding me. And I'm going to continuously pray, and you have to have faith and trust. So, no, my problems didn't take me out.

**LC:** God pours out His strength to us!

**CS:** Yes, I say to the Lord, "Are you sure I'm this strong?"

**LC:** There you go!

**CS:** What they say, God doesn't give you what you can't handle! Okay You would not allow it to come to me unless You could help me get through it. This I know: *I am not on my own*, I don't know how I'm going to get through it so I have to trust Him. I'm at the beginning of it with all the questions. So let me give it to You now.

**YS:** That's it! The secret is giving it to Him. We don't see the whole picture.

**CS:** Oh, that's the truth.

**YS:** God says in His Word that He is omniscient. So, He sees it all. When it's coming, He sees it. He knew how we were going to react. He sees the outcome. Yes, there is something we have to do in

that middle of all this in order to get to that great outcome: We have got to give it to Him.

**LC:**

Speak more about that middle part because that's where we live.

**YS:** Oh yes! I bought my condo 15 years ago and asked my mom to come stay with me. I could not foresee what was down the road for her and for me, pertaining to what would happen to her medically. She would need a lot of support. Before the pandemic my mother showed signs of forgetfulness. But very early on I did not even recognize what was happening to her; I just didn't. Some of the conversations we had, looking back on it now, I wish I had known. But wow, Lord I wish I had known. But I didn't. So later on, eventually she got tested, and she was diagnosed with dementia. This was very, very difficult. But I sought the Lord. And God helped me through so many different difficulties. God helped me cope with a loved one who has dementia and living with them.





And then the pandemic hit, and everything began shutting down.

I was able to get her into an adult day care center before the pandemic hit, so I was able to go to work. I can share one example of why

she could not be by herself. She will walk out the house and lock herself out. And then neighbors, thank God for the neighbors, who had my number, they would call and say your mom is sitting here with me. She has locked herself out. So, after that and a few other things, God gave me wisdom to look for an adult day care. Along with the help of my daughter, she was there to support me and help me through some difficult times.

Well, my job reduced my hours to limit exposure because we work with the public. Not only did the child day care centers close up but the adult day care centers closed also. One of Camille's friends is a nurse and her daughter, a highly intelligent teenager about 16 years old, was being

homeschooled. The daughter had such a heart of compassion for people, so since she wasn't going to school and her mom was home most of the time, they were willing to have me bring my mother to them on those days, since it wasn't full-time. Again, they opened the bank only three days a week and for only about three hours a day. But God is so good because they gave us full salary. That was a huge blessing!

My mom's dementia progressed and it became more difficult for me physically, and well as for my personal health. Mom wouldn't really sleep. She wakes up and walks around constantly, just taking cat naps. For me to get a good night sleep was very rare while she was home. So, I eventually had to block the outside door because she would try to leave and go outside.

I consider myself a light sleeper, but after four days of not sleeping your body tends to crash! I would be knocked out for only 4 to 5 hours and then be startled wondering, what is my mom doing? Sometimes I would wake up and she'd be standing right over me, just watching me. And then she would giggle, because she realized that she startled me. Other times I would catch her trying to move the chair that I put in front of the door to block the door.

*(Continued on Page 13)*



I had to thank God, because it had to come from God, all the patience that I needed then. Because this is my mom! I wanted to honor her and respect her.

(Yvette sobs a bit, as she struggles to continue)

**CS:** (Camille interjects) – Let me add a bit of detail. It was at the end of the school year, so the spring of 2020 through most of the summer of 2020 that my Granny was going to my friend's house during the days that my mom had to work. But when they had to go out of town, my grandma came to stay with me while I worked from home. My daughter, Cheyenne, would take care of Granny while I was working, and DJ also. They would

entertain her and keep her busy, because she would wander around getting into things and they would just have to keep up with her. I would get up to help her with any personal care she needed.

However; things changed, as we approached the fall, and the schools decided to go completely virtual. It prompted us to make a very hard decision, because they could not do virtual school and look after Granny. It was heartbreaking, because I didn't want to say I didn't want to take care of Granny. But we quickly realized that if I'm working and the kids were in school, there was no one to look after Granny. We took the 3-4 weeks notice to prepare, looking for a home for Granny. I could see it on my mother's face, so clearly, she did

*We* have accepted that  
there are so many things  
that are beyond our  
understanding

*Camille Strawder*





*not* want to put her in a nursing home at all. You hear so many horror stories, you know. But my friend who's a nurse who had worked in this industry helped us answer some of the questions we had: how does this nursing home compare to that nursing home? My friend allowed us to make informed decisions on where to inquire, knowing the best patient care locations.

But thank God that we found a faith-based nursing home, and they have been doing well. The social workers there were excellent with the paperwork and programs, and helped us navigate the process. This avoided a huge emotional expense on my mom having her there 24/7.

**YS:** This was a huge challenge, but God was there. Again, the social workers held our hands through the whole process. She informed us what we needed to do, all the forms we needed to complete and what programs she was eligible for. All of this was during the middle of Covid! Even though we were now informed, and this was the hardest thing – once she was admitted we could not physically visit her. She was quarantined for 14 days. Fortunately, much of this didn't really affect Granny at all.

**CS:** Thank God for that because she didn't react or

feel as though she was being abandoned because that would have been even harder to deal with.

**YS:** It was difficult for us. I was the one who took her on her first day and I had to leave her there. I couldn't stay, they said nope, you have to say your goodbyes now, outside of the facility. No visits until they were able to open the nursing home again. However, they were very gracious and sent a picture of mom after she got settled in her room. I still have the picture of the first day. That helped to communicate and share what was going on with my brother who doesn't live in the US, but lives in the Dominican Republic. It's just he and I. Yes, God helped me through that even though it was very difficult.

**CS:** So, she's been there now for three years.

**LC:** So how was her adjustment?

**YS:** This condition was strange in that she was unaware of the changes. But I'm actually happy for this part, she is a happy person. If you just start laughing, she'll laugh along with you.

**CS:** And Granny, she still loves music.

**YS:** Yes! When I sing hymns to her she joins in!

*(Continued on Page 15)*





**LC:** Does she have a favorite hymn?

**YS:** Yes, it is actually her mother's favorite hymn. Let's see, the words are: *Lead me, and guide me, along the way. For if you lead me I shall not stray...*

**LC:** Nice song!

**CS:** It's amazing, she doesn't remember our names, but if you say our names she'll remember our names but she does not associate them with us. It may be difficult to have a conversation with her, but if you just start singing a song...wow she will remember the words and start singing the words right along with you. Especially on holidays or her birthday, when we visit we'll sing holiday or birthday songs and she will just start singing with us.

**YS:** It's amazing how music stays with you! So, I always try to sing to her during our visits. Thank God that Covid waned, and they were able to open up visitations.

**CS:** We were able to visit her and could bring her outside. DJ was too young to go up to the units, but they allowed us to go outside in their garden patio area. Going outside was great because you were only allowed two people up on the floors. Outside there was fresh air, we could share snacks, we were

all together, taking pictures, talking, and having a good time.

**YS:** You know I really thank God for His leading, for the place she is staying at. And again, for the help God gave us to get her there. The facility itself is just so holy, it doesn't feel institutional. I am really very, very grateful for that. It makes a lot of difference. It is not perfect, because they had difficulties with staffing.

A big thing that came out of all this, is how I feel about the elderly now. They are so precious to me. When they were short staffed, and it was mealtime some residents needed help with cutting their food or drinking their beverages. I could not just sit there and not help. I just developed a heart for them. Now I pray for the staff and all of them because they have a difficult job. It is *not* easy. I try not to neglect my prayers for my mom and for the staff.

**LC:** Exactly, because the staff have their own challenges also.

**YS:** Absolutely! They have a family life too, and I've gotten close to some of them. If I were a billionaire and was allowed, I would give them bonuses all the time, just for the work that they do.



**LC:** They help bring and maintain a person's dignity, it is priceless.

**YS:** We are living longer in the United States, but the quality of our lives is also very important. So never forget about the difficulties that people face, that cause them to be in a nursing home.

**LC:** From what I've seen, if the staff can support each other as well as be somewhat encouraged by the families of the residents, this really helps the staff ride out the ups and downs of patient care.

**YS:** it can be heartbreaking for those who are caring, and while being understaffed.

**LC:** I find it amazing how you go through experiences that cause you to grow in significant ways. But you would never have chosen those experiences for yourself. And yet we discover this treasure that God expresses through us.

**YS:** Yes, that is true. As I mentioned when I moved into my condo, and my mother moved in four months later, who would've known how important that was. Then she was still driving herself around, taking care of Camille's children before they entered school. But I think I was in denial, or I didn't see the signs.

**LC:** The signs were very gradual, and not at all immediately obvious. Thank God for your family and Christian families who can go through these things with you.

**YS:** Oh, what a difference. I have seen unbelievers go through the same situations, but they go through in a way that seems hopeless, very frustrating. Not saying that is not a frustrating time, God has a way of giving you peace through it all. Especially when you're not making the progress that you need to make, it can be very frustrating. But you learn that God sees all!

**CS:** One thing that just popped into my mind, and the key thing is we should not ask why. We have accepted that there are so many things that are beyond our understanding, but we know that God understands all! So we don't have to ask why we are going through something, we say, "Okay Lord."

Yes, sometimes we cry out to God, "Lord, I don't understand this! But I accept, and I know, and I believe that You got all these ducks lined up for my benefit. I know that I may be just dealing with the first one here. But I know that You, Lord, will carry me through, or carry us through, or work out the situation for us." Those who are not believers will focus a lot on why this is happening to me. And  
*(Continued on Page 17)*



that is a tactic the devil uses to distract you and to put you on the wrong path. This will put your energy where it doesn't belong. I need to put my mind and attention on God, and not focus on trying to find the exit ramp. Let me stay on this highway and I will get where God has for me to be. Oh, to be in God's plan!

**LC:** Praise the Lord, sister. You're talking about God's wisdom and His ways.

**YS:** That is just so true.

**LC:** Oh, just to have the mindset to call on God and not ask why.

**CS:** When you see God work on the big, then it starts to trickle, down to the small. Lord, I can't find this swim cap, anywhere!

**LC, YS, CS:** (all laughing)

**CS:** I *know* this is nothing for you to do! Here's an example of a thing that happened just today. You know how market prices are just ridiculous, food's going through the roof. And I'm using my Safeway app and clipping coupons, trying to get a deal, and trying to get everything on sale. But I wasn't keeping track. So I said, "Lord I just need this to be



under \$100 today."

**YS, LC:** (laughing)

**CS:** So, when I bring it up it's \$147. Ugh, so then I put in my number and it came up to \$94!

**LC:** Lol, maybe should've asked for \$75! But who wouldn't serve a God like ours!

**CS:** I just don't understand why it's so hard. Maybe it's because I grew up in church, and this is what I have experienced, and that as a young person. This is what I know, trust God. So sometimes I don't understand why it's so hard for people; I know it's a flesh thing, and people haven't been exposed to the truth. But I could talk all day

about how God has worked in my life and what I've been through. God has done all this.

**YS:** Each person must experience God for themselves. Because He is a person, and people have to accept the concept that God is real, and you have to have a relationship with Him. Once you have that relationship with God, then these experiences will begin to happen.

**CS:** Oh take the Bible and hold it to someone's head, and say, "Try, just try Jesus!"

**YS:** Yes, that's the sentiment, you just want to give Christ to people. But you can't, they have to want it for themselves.

**LC:** This treasure comes only from God.

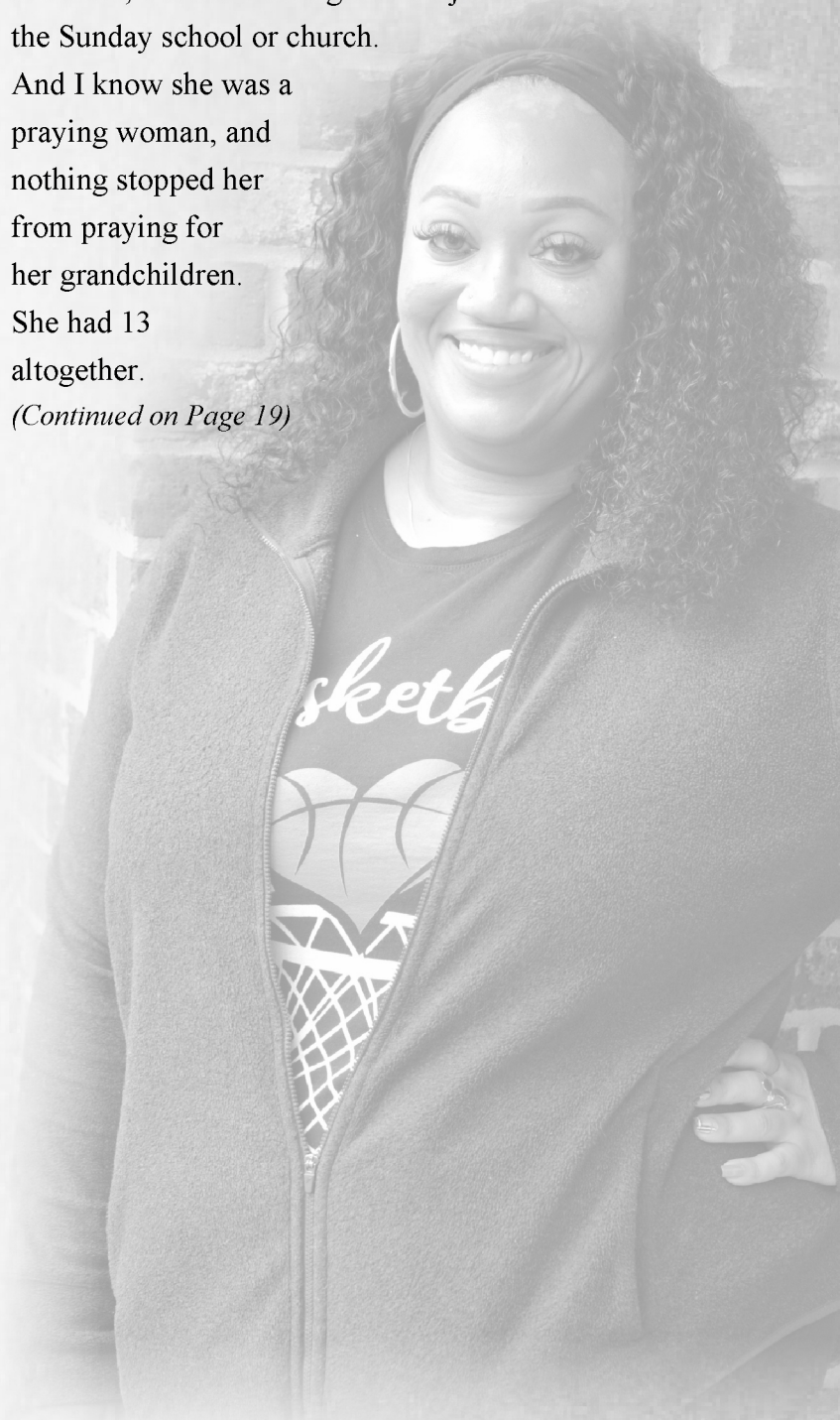
**CS:** We must pray for them.

**YS:** That's correct you do have to lift them up in prayer. It's good to keep testifying by your experience also. A lot of times I think back on my grandmother who died when I was six. But she made sure while we were young that we went to Sunday school. She was born and raised in Virginia, and then moved up here to Baltimore, to the city. She was raised in the country. Now she did

not drive, but she would get a taxi just to drive us to the Sunday school or church.

And I know she was a praying woman, and nothing stopped her from praying for her grandchildren. She had 13 altogether.

*(Continued on Page 19)*







**LC:** All of us, especially the young are blessed spiritually by what others give by way of impact.

**YS:** I know that Camille already knows this. I was raised practically all my life in the church, but I still had to get my own relationship with God. The church provides valuable knowledge, and information, but it is that personal walk and relationship that matters. You need a personal experience, you need to say your own “yes” to God, for yourself.

**CS:** Oh, if that foundation was not laid! That’s what I find is so important. And that is something that is passed down from generation to generation; it’s our foundation – that is where our strength comes from. He is who we rely on. He is your example of love. So, this foundation was laid for me, so that when I became an adult, I had that strong root. Should you ever get down to nothing, I can start back up again from my foundation.

This is what I pass onto my kids, that it’s God is who’s doing these things and taking care of us. We pray about everything. And they will say to me, well let’s pray about this. And I will, but also let them know that they can pray to God, too. You can pray to God directly, for your connection is not through me. I’m just so grateful to hear them say, well we need God in this or that. When I see and hear that it is so rewarding. This is where our help comes from.

This is my testimony of how prayer works. I found out about the place I’m living in now during the pandemic. But things were delayed because of the

pandemic. Only God kept us safe in the area that we were living in. So many things happened: a person was shot and killed, two buildings caught on fire, one of them was the building that we were living in. And I tell you we came out completely untouched. When I found out about this place, I drove by and saw that it was still being built. So, I put in an application. Even though no one answered the business phone, I kept checking in on it; calling and leaving a message.

Every two weeks or so after church I would ride by and check on the progress of the construction. One Sunday I told the kids we need to stop by and we need to pray. We need to pray for one of these homes, whichever one it is God can put our name on it. So, we sat there, and we prayed, and asked, “Lord I just need three bedrooms and two toilets.” That is exactly what I said. I saw that they were building garages and other stuff and said, “Lord, we don’t even need that. Just three bedrooms and two toilets. I would love to have the kids in a district where they could have additional resources for school.”

From that point on every two weeks we would drive by there, stop and pray. Later I took my mom for extra prayer support. We stopped there and we all prayed in the parking lot. Now, I thought my mom was going to pray, but she said, “No, no, no. I’m going to be in agreement with whatever you pray for. You pray”. So I prayed, and at the end, she said, “Lord I’m in agreement with her prayer.” We prayed about it every two weeks. I would still call the business office, but nobody answered the phone.





This first started in October 2020 and things started to happen in late April 2021. I saw that construction was finished, and I saw people moving in. I said, “Okay Lord.” And then someone finally answered the phone. This lady told me the paperwork was everywhere and they were not quite sure when I was going to get a phone call back. Next, I said, “Lord if this is where You want us to be You will have to make it happen.”

I told my landlord that I was *not* continuing my lease. But said, “Lord, I’ll keep looking until you give me the word that I’m supposed to be here.” I still didn’t hear from these people. So I saw a different place and signed the lease but it wasn’t supposed to be effective until May 1st. On April 28th I got a call that the house I wanted was available for me here! And she asked me if I wanted it. I said, “Yes!!!”

Now, I had to put down \$1,000 on this different lease, and I say, “Lord, do you want me to lose \$1,000?” And immediately the Holy Spirit put this image in my mind: the imagine a storm, raging. And the Holy Spirit said, “Isn’t this what you prayed for?!” Then immediately it was calm waters. So yes, I called that other office and told them that I need to cancel this lease. I knew it was not in effect yet because I hadn’t taken possession yet. The person I spoke with said they couldn’t act on that,

and they would have to call corporate. I said fine do what you need to do.

I said, “Lord if you want me to lose \$1,000, I know you’ll replace it somehow and some way!” A couple hours later got a call back, they’re refunding my money to me. I also had movers scheduled for this different plan, and when I called them to cancel the move, they said they needed to call me anyhow to reschedule. So, I rescheduled them for my *new* home!

Let’s see I got three bedrooms, 2 ½ baths, a garage, new washer and dryer, and a brand-new place never lived in before, they only wanted \$500. It was only God! All because we prayed and gave it to God. So within a few days of that phone call I had the keys and moved into my brand new house.


**YS:** I’ll never forget when she called me to tell me this!

**LC:** Somebody really called on the Lord.

**YS:** What blesses me so about this experience is when God spoke to you and said, “Isn’t this what you prayed for?!”

**LC & CS:** Amen!! Yes.

**CS:** You know, it wasn’t just the words, but the authority behind what the Lord spoke to me.

**LC:** Thank you, ladies. We indeed have this exquisite treasure in vessels of clay, so that the glory may be of God and not of us. 



**LET US PRAY**  
ANGELA HUNT BONITTO

**W**e each are a masterpiece waiting to happen, being molded, and shaped by The Master, Our Creator, until we are ready to withstand the fire in the kiln that turns us into a brilliant work of art.

My granddaughter is an artist. I marvel at how she can take a blank canvas and turn it into a beautiful masterpiece. A lot of thought goes into each piece – the size, what colors she is going to use, along with shapes, and inspiration. No two pieces are alike. They each have their own individual look. She takes her time to meticulously pull the piece together and when she has completed her work she steps back, looks and smiles at what she has created. A wonder for eyes to behold.

God took care when He formed us, counting the number of hairs on our heads, choosing our colors. He did all of this before we were in the womb. He said He formed us while we were in the womb. Scripture also tells us when He first formed man, He formed us in His own image. And God exclaimed that He was pleased with His masterpiece.



From the beginning of time, God desired to have a relationship with His masterpiece – His creation. If you have ever doubted your importance or if you are unsure why you are here, seek first a relationship with God, the One whom desires a relationship with you. Then everything will make sense – your existence, the plans for you, your importance and value to God.

Why would it stop or be any different now? God still desires to fellowship with us today. Fellowship is just one-on-one time with God. It can be transformative and powerful because it allows God to work through our weaknesses and limitations. But this can only happen if we are transparent with God. Transparency allows us to embrace our own vulnerabilities and rely on God's strength. Jesus often retreated to pray – fellowship with the Father. He said I can do nothing apart from the Father (John 5:19).



**When entering the prayer closet there are four points to keep in mind:**

**Let God speak to your heart.** You are coming to sit at the feet of your Creator and learn like Mary did with Jesus (Luke 10:38-39).

**Confess your sins,** which leads to genuine repentance (John 1:9).

**Lay your request before The Creator** recognizing that He alone has the power to answer you (Psalm 5:3).

**Give God thanks** for answered prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

All of these aspects of prayer involve fellowship with our Creator – The One who took the clay from the jar and formed us. He is personal, He cares for us, and He wants to have a relationship with us through prayer so that we can accomplish His will on earth. C.S. Lewis said it best when he said, “God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no

other.”

So, pour out your hearts and receive God’s strength and guidance, because it is not about our own strength or abilities, but about relying on God and surrendering to His will, just like the blank canvas surrenders to the artist.

**Let Us Pray...**

*Father today I surrender to God’s tender care for my mind, body, and soul, and my whole life. I relinquish everything to you. I embrace you Holy Spirit. Lead and guide my life from this day forward. Make me a change agent for you Lord. I thank you for choosing me. Thank you for showing me how powerful you are, how omniscient you are, and how loving you are. Thank you for forming me in your image. In Jesus name. **Amen!*** 🙏





## CHRISTIAN COMEDY**CORNER**

CAROLYN**JACKSON**  
COLLIN**DUNLAP**



### REMEMBER

**"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine"**

*Proverbs 17:22 (KJV)*



**I put my scale in a corner of the bathroom** and that's where the little liar will stay until it apologizes.

**Hard to believe I once had a phone** attached to a wall and, when it rang, I picked it up without knowing who was calling.

**Apparently, RSVP-ing** to a wedding invitation, "Maybe next time" isn't the correct response.

**How do you make a bandstand?** Take away their chairs.

**I'm sure glad I wasn't born in Germany.**

Why is that?

Because I don't speak German.

**It used to be only death and taxes.** Now, of course, there's shipping and handling, too.



**Teacher:** How old is your father?

**Harold:** He is 6 years old

**Teacher:** What! How is that possible?

**Harold:** He became a father only when I was born.



**Blessings 2U,  
Sister Carolyn Jackson  
Brother Collin Dunlap**





## **ON THE INSIDE COVERS**

**Inside Front:** Congregant Marcus Cobbs leads praise and worship as he blesses and ministers in song on May 21, 2023

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2023

**Inside Back:** Earl Slacum stretches forth his hand in agreement as Pastor Juanita Elliott gives an invitation for prayer during Sunday service on May 21, 2023

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2023



**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 & Prayer  
11:15 AM Morning Worship

**COMMUNION SERVICE:**

1st Sunday of Every Month

**EVERY WEDNESDAY:**

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

**1st & 3rd WEDNESDAYS:**

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

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**CARE & COMFORT MINISTRY**

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](http://www.columbiaccmd.org)

**CHURCH LIBRARY**

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