



the ENCOURAGER magazine

October 2025



LIVING SACRIFICE

C O L U M B I A C O M M U N I T Y C H U R C H

THEREFORE WHAT
God
has joined together
LET NO ONE SEPARATE
MARK 10:9, NIRV



ON THE **COVER**

Congregants and newlyweds Michael & Christella Jackson exude the joy and love of a new life together during their photoshoot on December 18, 2025.

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2025



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE **1** A Word from the Word

PAGE **3** Sacrificing
to Be Healthy: Carolyn Fleming, RN

PAGE **4** Christian Comedy Corner

PAGE **5** Let Us Pray: Angela Hunt Bonitto

PAGE **7** Family Focus: Crystal A. Hood

PAGE **9** Getting to Know: Michael & Christella Jackson

PAGE **19** Pressing On: Taylor Landrum

PAGE **23** Featured Article: Kim Odoms-Bolden

if you declare with your mouth,
"Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God
raised him from the dead

you will be saved

Romans 10:9, NIV

THE MAGAZINE **STAFF** Oct 2025

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
Pastor Juanita Elliott
Pastor Reginald L. Elliott
Carolyn Fleming, RN
Crystal Hood
Kelsey Hood
Angela Hunt Bonitto
Winnie LaFrance-Chambers
Taylor Landrum
Kim Odoms-Bolden
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.





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

Every person
either
lines themselves
up with the
WORD
and
purpose of God
or with
the dictates
of the world.

Pastor Reginald L. Elliott

BE A LIVING SACRIFICE

Solomon, the ancient wise King of Israel writes that the whole purpose of life is to serve the Lord and keep His commandments. Every man is presented with a choice to either believe God's Word or pursue a different path. While choosing to serve the Lord may at times seem hard, it is the only way to find the happiness we all seek. As one makes his choice regarding which path he will choose, it is important to know exactly what is involved in serving the Lord.

In days of old God required man to offer sacrifices as part of their worship and service. However, after the sacrifice Jesus made for all mankind at Calvary, God speaks to man differently about what man's worship and service should look like. After receiving the benefits of Calvary by faith, we are told in Romans 12:1 that we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God and calls it our reasonable service. It furthers tells us in Romans 12:2 that this is the process whereby we come to know the perfect will of God for our lives.

Every person either lines themselves up with the Word and purpose of God or with the dictates of the world. By offering our physical life as living

offerings unto God, we experience the benefit of living life to the fullest extent possible because we are living in agreement with God's purpose for our life. Offering our lives in service to God involves choice, commitment and perseverance. Every day we must choose to obey Him, commit every area of our lives to following Him, and faithfully stand on His Word. By doing this we are in essence bringing our lives to Him as the ancient Israelites brought animal sacrifices, and as He moved in response to their sacrifice so He receives

our lives. We are telling Him that it is in Him that we have our very being and that our lives now belong to Him. We are saying to Him where you lead me, I will follow. I am giving my life to you as a living sacrifice, be pleased with it Lord. This is the path to abundant life; will you follow it? Will you give your life as a living sacrifice?



OFFERING
our lives
to
GOD
involves choice,
commitment,
and
perseverance.

Pastor Reginald L. Elliott

SACRIFICING TO BE **HEALTHY**

CAROLYN FLEMING, RN

Sacrifice refers to giving up something that is important to us, to gain something more important. This can manifest in multiple aspects of our lives. It might be working extra hard to get ahead on a job. Maybe personal activities we enjoy might have to be limited to obtain financial stability in our family.

Spiritual sacrifice requires us to contribute our hearts and actions as offerings to God. Our ultimate purpose is to draw closer to God's purpose for our lives and deepen our relationship with Him. We accomplish this through obedience to His Word and spending time daily with Him.


Achieving good health may require sacrifices. Unhealthy foods, excess sugar and salt may need to be limited. There may be a "junk food" that is a particular weakness for you. Eliminating it all together probably won't work long term, but you can certainly set limits to the amount you consume on a regular basis. Also watching your intake of unhealthy processed foods, sugary drinks, and excessive salt and sugar intake will also be helpful. Focus on a balanced diet of fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains.



We all like to eat out. It's nice to have someone else, cook for us, serve the food, and clean up after. The advantage of eating at home is controlling the ingredients and the portion sizes.

Mindful eating refers to not being distracted while you eat. Pay attention to the act of eating. You are more likely to eat responsibly.

Increasing physical activity may require sacrifice also. Exercising regularly each week can be challenging but it is essential. Watch out for too many sedentary habits. Getting an adequate amount of restorative sleep is a necessary component of a healthy lifestyle as well.

If we can start to look at a healthy lifestyle more as an investment in long term well-being rather than sacrifice, it may make the process of change a little easier. 



CHRISTIAN COMEDY CORNER

MICHAEL R. SPRY

REMEMBER

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine"

Proverbs 17:22 (KJV)

The Frugal Christian walked into the house panting and almost completely exhausted. "What happened, honey?" inquired his wife. "It's a great new idea I have to be a better steward of our resources," he gasped. "I ran all the way home from the stewardship committee meeting behind the bus and saved \$2.00". "That wasn't very bright," replied his flustered wife. "Why didn't you run behind a taxi and save \$15.00?"



In a moment of creative inspiration, the entrepreneur who owned the coin-op laundry beside the church commissioned this sign for his window: "Where cleanliness really is next to Godliness!"

What happened to the man who stole an Advent Calendar?

He got 25 days!



What carol is heard in the desert?


O camel ye faithful!

What did Adam say on the day before Christmas?

It's Christmas, Eve!

After worship one Sunday a little boy told the pastor, "When I grow up, I'm going to give you some money."

"Well, thank you," the pastor replied, "but why?"

"Because my daddy says you're one of the poorest preachers we've ever had." 

THE COST OF TRUE WORSHIP

As Christians, many of us confuse true worship with rushed prayers—thinking a quick “check-in” with God is enough while life’s distractions creep in. We’re scrolling on our phones, we’re worrying, overworking, living life, but God only gets whatever time is left. What’s wrong with this picture? Scripture makes it clear: God desires our whole life, not a small, scheduled slice of it. We love worship that fits neatly into our lives—short prayers, familiar songs, moments that don’t disrupt our schedules or challenge our comfort. And while God welcomes us just as we are, He never intends for us to stay there. True worship has always required more than convenience. It requires surrender.

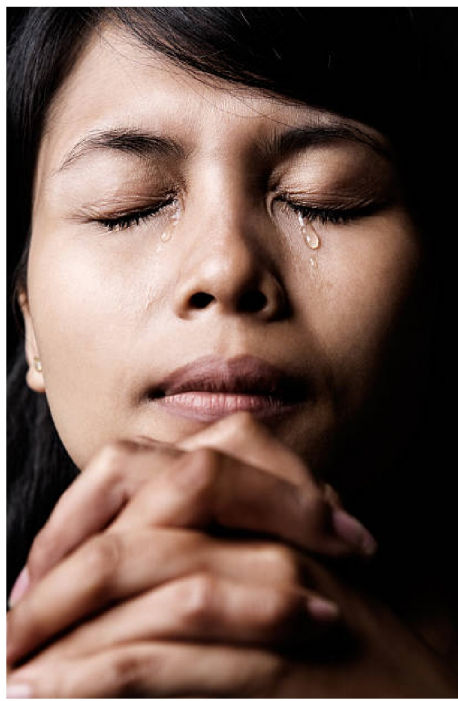
Jesus told the woman at the well that the Father is seeking those who will worship Him “in the Spirit and in truth” (John 4:23–24, NIV). What Jesus was really saying is this: what are you willing to sacrifice for the Father? Authentic worship isn’t

cheap. It’s costly. And it often asks something of us we weren’t planning to give.

Throughout Scripture, worship and sacrifice go hand in hand. King David refused to offer God a sacrifice that cost him nothing (2 Samuel 24:24, NIV). He understood something most of us don’t get: worship that transforms us usually shakes us up first. When we give God only what’s left over—our spare time, our safe prayers, our surface-level praise—we miss the depth of relationship into which He’s inviting us.

Prayer that costs us something changes us. The prayers that linger, wrestle, and stretch us

beyond comfort are the ones that shape our faith. Jesus asked His disciples to stay awake and pray with Him in His darkest hour, and they couldn’t do it (Matthew 26:40, NIV). Not because they didn’t love Him—but because surrender is hard. Scripture also reminds us of the rich man who walked away sorrowful because he could not surrender his wealth; his possessions had his whole heart. This doesn’t have to be true for us today.



Jesus showed us the way when He prayed, “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42, NIV). This should be the heart of every Christian. We are called—not casually invited—to a life of intentional, surrendered prayer. A life where we show up even when it costs us time, pride, rest, or control. Surrender is the currency of true worship.

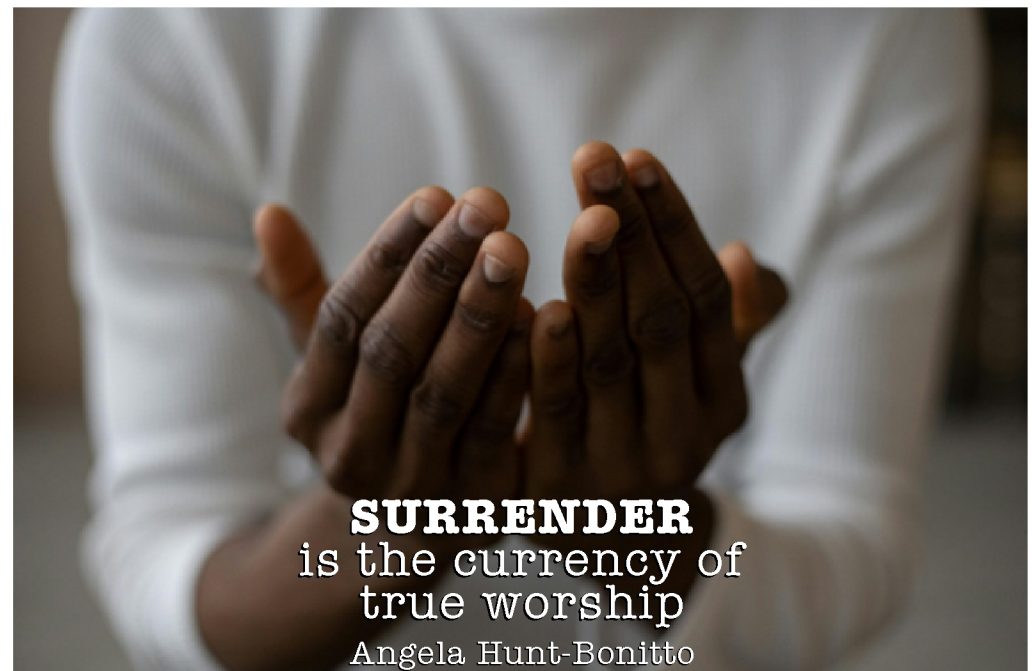
And when we trust God with all our heart instead of leaning on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5–6, NIV), we discover that the cost is never greater than the reward.

God is not asking for perfection. He’s asking for presence. When we draw near to Him, He draws near to us (James 4:8, NIV). What we lay down in worship, He redeems with purpose.

Reflection Questions

Where has my worship become more convenient than surrendered?

What is God asking me to lay down in this season



so my prayer life can go deeper?

How would my relationship with God change if I showed up to pray even when it costs me something?

Let Us Pray...

Father God, You are worthy of more than what is easy or convenient. Teach us how to worship You with our whole heart, even when it costs us something. We surrender our time, our plans, and our need for control. Draw us deeper into Your presence and make our lives a living offering to You. We answer Your call to pray. In Jesus' name,

Amen! 

HOLD ON TO JESUS

FAMILY FOCUS
CRYSTAL A. HOOD

T

here is a book called *You Are Special* by Max Lucado. In this book, the characters live in the town of Wemmickville and are called Wemmicks. Each day, the residents award stickers—gold stars for the talented, smart, and attractive Wemmicks, and gray dots for those who make mistakes or are just plain ordinary. One character, Punchinello, covered in gray dots, begins to feel worthless, then he sees another Wemmick, Lucia. The amazing thing with Lucia is that no dots or stars would stick to her. Punchinello desires to be the same way and asked her how she did it. She said she visits Eli, the woodcarver, and sits with him every day. Punchinello ponders this through the night and then decides to see Eli. When he goes, he learns that Eli is his creator and that his worth comes from a different source.

You Are Special was often read to my children to encourage them in their own walk with God, but it also resonated with me because it reminded me of my own childhood experience. When I was twelve and received salvation, I experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit inside of me in a way that the things of this world dulled by comparison. In God's


presence, I felt pure joy and saw His beauty. It was so wonderful, I just wanted to stay there and hold onto it. I did not want to do anything that would take me away from, diminish, or taint it. Alcohol, drugs, sexual promiscuity, crude language, or explicit

discussions did not entice me. Peer pressure did not sway me. I would rather be alone in the presence of God than with a group of people away from Him. I lived the lesson Eli told Punchinello, "The stickers only stick if they matter to you. The more you trust in my love (God's love), the less you care about their stickers."

The second part of *You Are Special*, which my children often heard, is titled *If Only I Had A Green Nose*. The blurb on its back cover states, "A green nose. How silly, thought Punchinello. It wouldn't make him faster, stronger, or even smarter. It would only make him greener—and make him look just like all the other Wemmicks! Why would he want

that when he knows Eli made each of them different for a reason? But when Punchinello stops visiting Eli regularly, a painted nose somehow doesn't seem as foolish anymore. Now more than ever, Punchinello needs to hear his maker say, 'I'll always help you be who I made you to be.'"

God's Word tells us that when we purposefully pursue having our minds and bodies surrendered to Him, we are a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to Him, which is our reasonable service of worship to God (Romans 12:1). Basically, all that occurred as I sought to be close to God was me outwardly and openly worshiping Him.

Thankfully, I am not unique in my pursuit of God, nor alone. There are so many others (both in the Bible and living today) whose testimonies profess to the same, if not more, experiences, and they encourage my heart. I can also attest, as we all can, that there are times in my life in which I do not act, think or believe as my Heavenly Father raised me. The only one who is unique and righteous is Jesus. If all we do is hold on to Him, we too can be righteous in the eyes of God and act in holiness for He is holy. Through His holiness we are able to do what is right, pure, good etc... according to our Heavenly Father. 



MICHAEL &
CHRISTELLA

Jackson
GETTING TO KNOW
ASSISTANT PASTOR LINWOOD CHILDS



God reveals His unique love for us by the great sacrifice he made through Jesus. As a way to express our great love for Him the Apostle Paul pleads for God, to every Christian, to become a *living* sacrifice. I recently spoke to our featured couple Michael and Christella Jackson about places where sacrifices are needed. I began our conversation a bit unusually.

Linwood Childs (LC): This question is not to be political but to start the conversation. Do you think that there's going to be a long-lasting effect on the US due to our current President's unusual actions?

Christella Jackson (CJ): *Absolutely.*

LC: Why is that?

CJ: I would say specifically because of the way migrant people have been targeted, singled-out and told that they have to leave the country and taken out by ICE. This is the thing that impacts many generations.

LC: So, you don't think that they'll get over it with the next Presidential administration?

CJ: I think it's a very complex issue within our country and as well as in other countries. We

should treat all people better, just in general. We are a country of immigrants. We market this society as a perfect American dream that we want everybody to experience. But this current administration does not want that to happen, especially if they're black or brown people.

LC: This is totally opposite of what America has been known for. We've had moments that we were fearful of immigrants, especially during war times when we didn't know how to assess our true enemies. But by and large we have been a country that has received many immigrants on an ongoing, if not escalating basis. This is antithetical to the foundations of our society. I am also concerned about how many of our international alliances are crumbling. Those international alliances are at present limiting their concerns to this current presidency, but not in our broader culture and general mentality. At least that's what I'm hoping.

CJ: I think that other national leadership would have better ways of dealing with "crime" that's being perpetrated by immigrants. And that statistical piece of data provided is not accurate. There are better ways to welcome people into the country in a way that is more loving and caring. But like I said it's a multi-layered issue, I don't think that there is one single answer to this.

(Continued on Page 11)

I needed
a strong
reminder
that I had
**PUT MY
LIFE**
in HIS
hands

Michael Jackson, II



Immigrants shouldn't be afraid to go to work, and their kids shouldn't be afraid to go to school.

LC: All around the world there are tensions due to economic pressures and political pressures, which are driving people to think that it is better to stay where they are than come to America. Some Americans will relocate to other areas of our country hopefully thinking it is going to be better than their current environment and experiences. But imagine when you're in a country no matter where you go, you cannot escape the same oppression and injustice. Where do you go and what do you do? It is then that America looks really good. And of course, the reality is we cannot take everyone who wants to come here. And the media espouses the economic burden and social implications of taking very large number of immigrants in at one time. Then in the same newscast we will hear about how many new billionaires and millionaires there are. It can seem disingenuous.

I was listening to an expert in international economics and law say that it is imperative that those with exceptional wealth do not sit on it, but truly reinvest it into bettering society. He was describing a recycling of that wealth back through the very economy from which they received it. And



in many cases the way that it has been done is through technological improvements. He noted again that if the idea of being wealthy is to hold on to your new wealth, then the result would be the corruption of society.

CJ: I can understand being willing to have a little bit of a nest egg, but we don't need the wealth of the country resting in the hands of the 1%.

LC: A model can be seen in one of the projects of Bill Gates. When you see that the world is suffering due to a lack of medical breakthroughs, sacrifice \$2-\$3 billion of your \$50 billion, to fund that needed research so many nations can have access to those solutions. It can only help everyone's interest. Do this instead of trying to find new ways to spend it on yourself.



Michael Jackson (MJ): Yes, those are the ones who have a selfish mentality. They are not concerned with the general population.

LC: It is a huge economic weight on a society when they do not ask how I can improve what is around me. The question is how can I make life better? It is then that they can see a reason why anyone should have wealth. Nonetheless, every level of life, rich or poor, young or old, requires sacrifice, some level of delayed gratification.

What part of society do you think would benefit if critical sacrifices were made?

CJ: (with only a moment's hesitation) For one, the educational system.

LC: I definitely agree!

CJ: Michael and I are both products of public schools. I taught in public schools for 10 years before I transitioned to a private school, Layola Blakefield, an all-boys Catholic school. I teach middle-school art. I honestly think if we can do what we do at a public level many issues with public school issues would be solved.

We have small class sizes; we have clubs and activities. There are a lot of boys that go to our school who are not athletic, even though a vast majority of the boys are athletic. We have a great athletic program. We have a club for almost everything. There's a live action role-playing club, we call it LARP. We have a culinary club, mountain climbing club, we have ski clubs. There's a club in the high school called art for others, in which we go out into the community and bring art to lots of different individuals. Today we had an event at a retirement community.

Having an understanding of how the adolescent mind works is a big plus. For private and public school, every year there is usually a new jargon or buzz-word that educators like to incorporate in our meetings, such as our back-to-school meetings and faculty meetings. The effort is to make them a part
(Continued on Page 13)

of the school community. It's generally a good idea. I remember the word for one school year was *rigor*. That was everywhere. But to have a new buzz-word *every* year, is not enough time to change the culture. If you had 3-5 words that you focused on and had a 5-to-10-year plan, then that's the things that can be more sustainable.

One year, in Baltimore County, as I was packing up my class getting ready for the summer, I had this thought that popped into my head: Out of all the classes that I teach I don't know if I really got to know any of my students. What do they like to do outside of school? Where do they like to go for vacation if they take vacations? What kind of books do they like to read? I had this really sad

feeling that I just did not know my kids. There were so many of them and behavior was an issue, with little support from administration.

LC: Did you find success working with the parents who were motivated parents?

CJ: Yes. I have parents that are actually happy to receive a call from the school from me, even when there's something that's not so good. Especially, I find in the 6 or 7th grade a lot of parents will say, "My son is now transitioning from middle school, and I want him to be an advocate for his own education. So, we're not going to check his grades all the time". Consequently, they don't know when he's slipping at school. I think that if in the public

Coming back
finally to my faith
was a pretty
big step
for me
Christella Jackson





school we had the support then; many issues would be resolved.

LC: Why isn't there more support? What is behind the lack of support.

CJ: Funding, for one, which comes from the taxes from that neighborhood. You can have a low tax base, and don't have a lot of funding. Who is to say that one neighborhood of kids is more deserving of clubs and activities funding than another neighborhood. That's not really right.

LC: Do you think funding is going to be the definitive answer?

CJ: No, it also has to do with people being compassionate toward other people.

LC: Definitely.

CJ: If you don't have a lot of compassion for families that are at different levels of income... well...

LC: You are truly not going to get anything really done without compassion. You need something that

gets you up in the morning with the mindset focusing not yourself, but for others. Successful outcomes boil down to a very practical level, with everyone, or as many as will, asking themselves what can I do to help?

CJ: Yes!

LC: The real question is, how can I make things better?

CJ: Money can help but it's not the deciding factor. Schools need a service project focus! Even for kids that are very fortunate in life. Going to other US locations to help people, serving in an area that you are not used to, seeing the reality of other people. It gives you a better worldview.

LC: It is often said it's the little things that matter the most.

CJ: You can make up grab bags of shelf stable foods and sanitary wipes to give out if you come across someone who could need it. Then add in a little note of compassion and encouragement!

(Continued on Page 15)



LC: You've just described missions and ministry.

CJ: When you hear the word “ministry” some think “religious” and that can be hard for some people to get behind. It’s just serving others, especially in an area you’re not familiar with. *Seeing* their reality, you get a better worldview. If all you do is live in an upper-crust world, doing these things can build compassion in you.

LC: You may not realize how much you have until you start helping someone who has less.

CJ: Yes.

LC: How is sacrifice a part of this solution?

CJ: Well, time. You’ve got to have time to help. A lot of people, if you ask them to put one more thing on their plate, a lot of people in different jobs or situations will simply say they don’t have time for that. Looking at your own habits and seeing if there’s an hour or two that can be used. Things can really change when you step outside your comfort zone.

LC: It can be hard to understand the negative impact of *not* reaching out can have. We are

constantly bombarded with negative news reports, or worsening conditions and your life can become filled with trouble and negativity which may make you think nothing can be done so why try. What can stop that downward spiral is an attitude, “ Well let me at least stop and help *one* person or one group of people.”

The company I work for provides 16 hours of paid volunteer time. This is in addition to the typical vacation and personal leave time. They believe in supporting volunteerism. The Apostle Paul uses a strong word in Romans 12, “ beseech”. He pleads with them and us, to surrender and sacrifice to God and let God use you.

What sacrifices do you think children need to make?

CJ: It’s related to time as well. The general consensus is that kids are spending too much screen time. Kids need to get outside and play and not be on their phones all the time. You don’t need to be a fitness star, but dress appropriately and be in nature, there’s nothing really like it.



LC: We need examples to be better.

CJ: We're saying sacrifice the children need, but it's really the adults in the children's lives. It is really true that it takes a village to raise a child well. A lot of kids don't have a village, or the village is very small. That is the real challenge.

LC: How needed is the male role modeling in a child's development and education!

CJ: We need more strong men in education!

LC: Everyone has something unique that is brought to the situation. You still have something valuable to give, even if it costs you to give it. I'm hoping people understand the rewards are greater than the price.

Mike ,tell me something that you don't like to do?

MJ: It's a weird answer. Because there are some things I don't like to do, but I do them anyway. I

really don't like to make the bed in the morning. I just figured I'm going to later on get back into bed. Do I really need to make it up just so I can undo it and go back to bed? But my wife likes a made-up bed. I leave a little bit after her so before I leave, I try to make sure that I make the bed.

CJ: (laughs)

MJ: I'm sure there are a lot of stuff I just don't like to do. But I live in a house with another person. I try to make sure we can enjoy our house and things aren't building up. I'm sure there's a longer list, but I have forgotten about how I feel about them, because we're trying to build our home.

LC: My reason for asking is for this follow-up question: How do you feel when it's done?

MJ: I feel good when it's done, which is part of the reason I do it, even though I don't like to do it.

(Continued on Page 17)

LC: These things allow us to explore our motivations. Some will say I don't want to this or that and they don't do it. Others will say the exact same words, but they say I will do it. It begs the question, why do you then do it. I think it boils down to the underlying attitude of being willing to sacrifice for something greater.

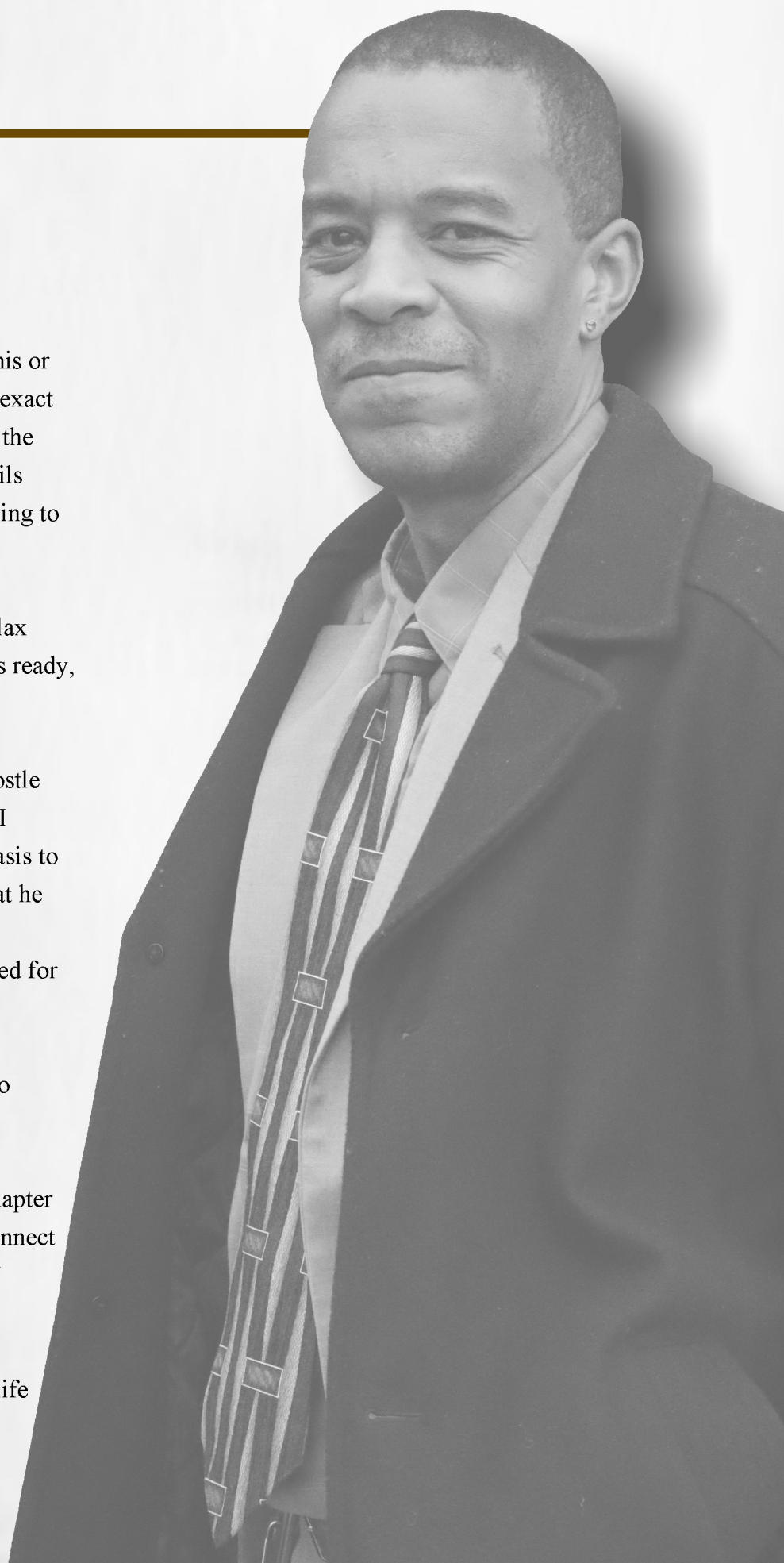
MJ: It allows my wife to come home and relax when she gets in from school and when she's ready, she gets to climb into a nicely made-up bed.

LC: Often, I ask to myself how and why Apostle Paul put his words in a plea in Romans 12, "I beseech you". Chapter 11 has much of the basis to make yourself a sacrifice. I am reminded, that he said it's by the *mercies* of God. The proper response to God's mercy is sacrifice. The need for sacrifice is huge, everywhere you turn.

CJ: Does Paul give any instruction on how to become a sacrifice?

LC: Yes! In the same chapter. Later, read Chapter 12 in a modern version and see if you can connect back to verses 1 and 2. What is your view of sacrifice?

MJ: Well...sacrifice has certainly made my life





better. I grew up in a family that sacrificed a lot for myself, my brother and sister. I watched them sacrifice things for their families, my aunts and uncles, cousins. My parents are very generous with their time.

LC: How did that impact you or the other members of your family.

MJ: I saw that family would turn to my family... for multiple reasons. If something came up they would come and talk to them. Ask them for help.

Growing in that kind of household was pretty tough. As I became an adult and I stepped back I saw what my parents were actually doing with their life and the reason why. When you told us the topic was sacrifice. I had this whole thing planned out how I don't see things I do as being a sacrifice. I think I was looking at it on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice. Realizing, I can't come close to that! But as we have had this conversation, I noticed that sacrifice is just small things. If someone should call and say he needs help moving and you say, "Okay, tell me the time and I'll be there". If someone needs help finishing their math homework, and you stop what you're doing, and you help with the math problem or science problem or whatever it is. I feel
(Continued on Page 19)

like the example my parents set greatly impacted my life. When most people know if they ask me for help, I typically will say yes, let me know what time. I've watched my parents sacrifice and how it has impacted my life and I'd like to think that I can have that same type of impact.

LC: A piercing question—do you think that you would have the same attitude you just mentioned if it did not come from your parents.

MJ: (silence)... I do. It has to do with how that sacrifice impacts your life. It makes you feel valuable. Even if it's someone outside of your household. I was very fortunate; my family set a great example. We also lived in a neighborhood, and we had family who extended this theme mentality. The way it felt when you were young, when someone went outside to play catch with you, or went to a game. There were many things they could have been doing with their time. But for them to take a little portion of their day come to watch you or come to see you. I feel like the impact that it has changes the way you feel about yourself. When I look at what others have done for me, my sacrifices don't seem like much.

LC: You have said a mouthful, you may not realize it, but you have.

CJ: I was raised in a Catholic church, with an uncle on

my mom's side, being a priest. But after a while my mom wanted to explore other churches. My dad went along. But my uncle was very upset and refused even to speak to us for many years, even though he was family. But we went to a bunch of other churches. I was still young and I was allowed to bring coloring books. Mom knew I would be listening to everything even while I was being creative.

Let's see, we went to Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and a few of the Interfaith Center churches near Wilde Lake High School. We settled down and went to St. John's Presbyterian for many years. As I got older and moved out, I wasn't feeling particularly religious, but I considered myself spiritual. I even went with my friend to a few Quacker meetings in Baltimore. For a while I went to a Universalist church, where they never, ever even say the name Jesus, or God or mention the Bible. I wanted a community of church. I was





still so disillusioned by my uncle's response to us leaving. I finally had to reconcile my relationship with the church in many ways, it took a while. Coming back finally to my faith was a pretty big step for me. Working at a religious institution helped. We start every class period with prayer. We have Mass once a month. It was a really big deal for me to come back to place where I could talk about God and Jesus, I was looking for sense of community and I think CCC has that.

LC: Amen!

CJ: I'm learning every day about prayer, and how God has been working in my whole life even when I really wasn't seriously thinking about God. There are a lot of songs we sing at CCC that are deeply emotional for me. What is that song?

MJ: From the men's choir? "God's Grace"?


CJ: Yes, God's grace! When I heard that song, it was a whole... I had never heard that song until they sang it. I was almost hysterical for the longest time. So, all that time I didn't pay any attention to

things are so real it can be hard to describe. (Christella shared with me a spiritual pilgrimage trip her institute put together in Italy.)

CJ: Although I'm back, I don't feel as though it's over, because it's ongoing.

LC: in closing as I typically ask, what is your favorite scripture and song?

CJ: I have mine as my work computer wallpaper so that it comes up every time I turn it on. It stays up as a background through all my PowerPoint lessons. Proverbs 3:5, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding." My favorite song is "Constant".

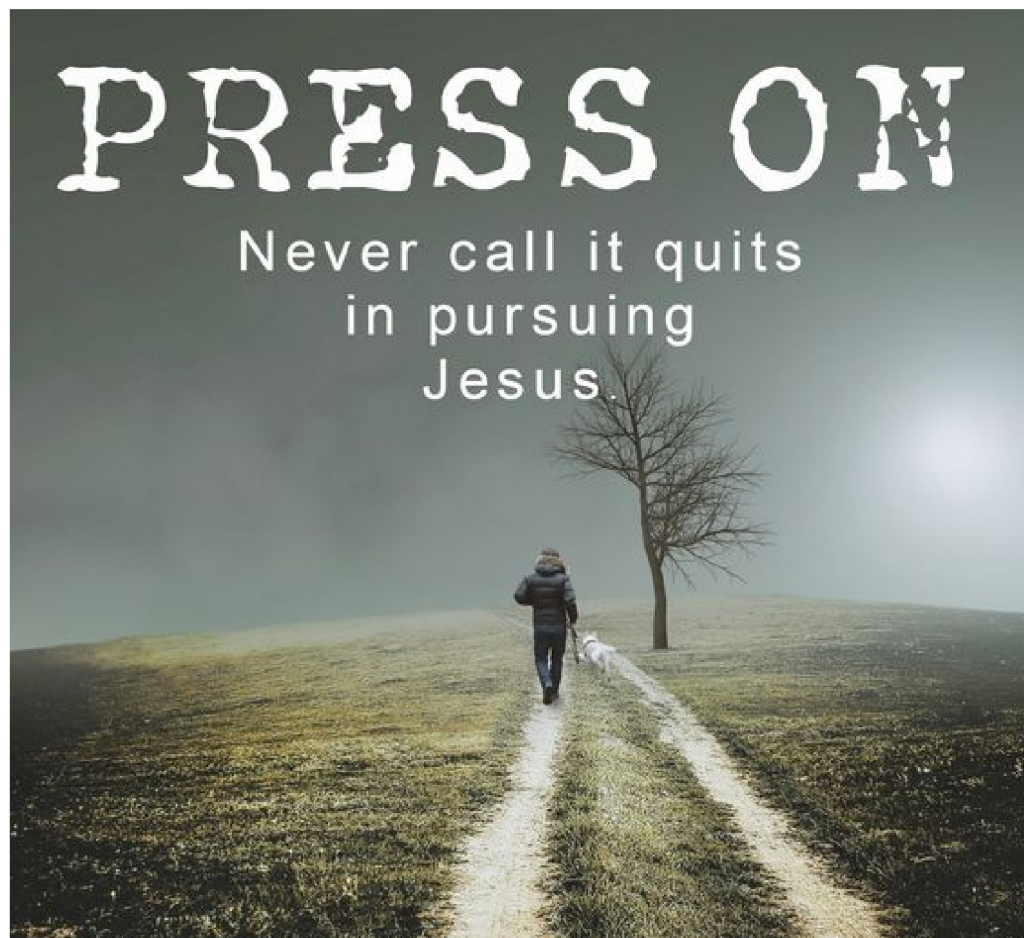
MJ: This also has been my favorite scripture for a long time. In my mid-twenties I brought a stainless-steel ring with part of the verse Proverb 3:5. I had already memorized the whole verse. I needed a strong reminder that I had put my life in His hands. That I would trust what God has for me. That one has seen me through a lot of years. My favorite song is "Jireh" by Maverick City Music. 

God, my faith or anything, God was still there!!

LC: Yes, He's amazing. Some

Living life as a Christian can be tough sometimes. God's demands for us require us to live a life different and separate from the people of the secular world. We see people around us doing things that we have been commanded not to do – or ignoring the calls that God *does* have for us – and a lot of times, we see them succeeding while doing so.

However, the closer we get to God, the more we realize that although this seems like a burden, it is actually one of God's greatest blessings. God does not call us “apart” from the world to our detriment, God calls us “apart” from the rest of the world because the wages of sin is death. No matter how much it seems like the workers of evil – or at the very least people who aren't following Christ – are living their best lives and suffering no repercussions for the lives that they are living, the Bible assures us that God is keeping score. Satan has blinded people into believing that they can live



any way that they want, which means that as Christians we are called to live our lives in such a way that those same people are drawn back to the one true King.

When we are called to be “Living Sacrifices”, God is calling us to do our very best to make our lives resemble that of Jesus Christ. God is calling us to not live after the flesh, but after the Spirit. When we are living after the flesh, we are

doing what *we* want to do, but when we are living after the Spirit, our actions are guided by God Himself.

Professing yourself as a Christian is the most powerful statement you can make – and if you understand and believe what that means in your heart – it is the best thing you can ever do in life. It comes with the assurance that you will one day enter into God’s Heavenly Kingdom, and that you will have everlasting life. That is such good news that God has called everyone who has heard it to tell everyone else, such that everyone can receive that wonderful blessing.

Unfortunately, Satan is literally hell-bent on stopping people from hearing, believing, and accepting the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which places us – as soldiers of Christ – in a position of warfare. Our own Christianity – the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the belt of truth – are our weapons and defense, and each of them are supreme.

Our living sacrifice only requires that we don this armor daily and present ourselves before God ready to do whatever He asks, knowing that He Himself goes with us. Thus, our living sacrifice mimics that of Jesus Christ, and with Him comes the blessings of eternity.



WHEN WE ARE
LIVING AFTER
THE SPIRIT,
OUR ACTIONS
ARE GUIDED
BY
GOD
HIMSELF

TAYLOR LANDRUM



FEATURED ARTICLE
KIM ODOMS-BOLDEN


"As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in scripture it says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame...' But you [*Christians*] are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, [*also*] God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:4-6, 9, NIV).

In the natural world a cornerstone is the essential stone of a building that connects two intersecting walls, establishing the chief foundation upon which something is built. In the spiritual sense, Jesus called by the Most High God the "Cornerstone" serves as the most crucial element that supports and stabilizes the Church. Jesus is the key element and component that stabilizes the living stones (the Church) that are being built into a spiritual house, a place of worship.

Whereby, Jesus as the Cornerstone is an indispensable part of the structure of the church "as is" without blemish, yet, the spiritual stones (Christians) being built in a spiritual house are challenged daily to "abstain from sinful desires,

which wage war against their soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you [*Christians*] of doing wrong, they may see their good deeds..." (1 Peter 2:11-12, NIV), sacrifices, dying to sins and living for righteousness that even the pagan will glorify God.

Christians are often challenged with doing what they know, no questions asked, the "right thing" they know is right to do. God tells His people in view of God's mercy (that we have received time and again) that in obedience unto Him we offer ourselves as living sacrifices, buildable stones even when we know what is right, but don't feel like doing right. Jonah knowing what God wanted him to do and made plans to not do the right thing while in the vile, stinky, darkness of the belly of a fish still mustered up a sacrifice of praise stating, "But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.' And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land" (Jonah 2:9-10, NIV).

You, Christian, a special, prized possession rescued out of your own darkness, how are your living sacrifices? How are your sacrifices of praise? How are you as living stones fitting in conjunction with the Cornerstone in the "spiritual house" of God? 



ON THE INSIDE COVERS

Inside Front: CCC members, family and friends indulged in celebratory cupcakes to honor and celebrate Pastors Reginald & Juanita Elliott's 59th wedding anniversary after service in November 2025

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2025

Inside Back: Deacon Clyde & Ollie Spence were recognized and honored by the congregation for celebrating an **INCREDIBLE 70 YEARS** of marriage. Mrs. Spence proudly read to attendees the elements of their success and other bits of wisdom which blessed awed attendees during service on October 26, 2025

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2025

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

CHURCH LIBRARY

Open every 1st & 3rd Sunday after service until 1:00 PM

Library Website: <https://columbiacommunity.library.site>