

## “TRANSFORMED BY THE WORD OF GOD”

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To be transformed means to change in appearance, form, nature or condition. To conform means to adapt or make similar.

Romans 8: 29 reads as follows, ‘For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.’

We have all heard the saying, come as you are, but in order to be transformed, you can't stay as you are. There should be consistent, visible changes within our walk, talk and behavior as a result of studying God's word.

Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light for my path.”

This scripture simply tells us the world is dark. But if we focus on the word of God, and follow the path that has been marked for each of us, we will find it's a path of lifelong blessings and righteousness.

I always thought I knew where I was going and that I should set my own path. As you can imagine, those plans did not work out most of the times. Until I began to focus on the word of God and believed in my heart what it said—things did not change. I had to learn to wait on God, be patient and have faith in what he promised.

Some of us attend bible study ever week, we study and discuss the lessons, but still, there is no visible change. There should be changes in our attitudes and the way we carry ourselves as Christians. When true transformation occurs, someone should see it. I know I have truly been transformed by studying the word of God. Although transformation is a process, I no longer do some of the things I once did and I'm trying each day to get victory in other areas.

While growing up I always heard my mother sing, create in me a clean heart so I may serve thee. I often wondered why she sang that song. But as I began to study God's word I realized she too had issues and needed God to help transform her. If we do not study God's word and apply it to our lives, there will be no transformation.

Transformation is a process comparable to the metamorphosis of some insects. One of the most fascinating examples is how a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly. A caterpillar's skin can't stretch except when new. As it consumes food, its skin quickly stretches to the limit. The only reason it can grow larger is a new soft skin forms under the old and after a while the old skin bursts open and discards. The process gets real interesting. The caterpillar attaches itself to a twig, sheds its skin and creates a chrysalis. It now appears as a totally different insect, this strange creature is called a Pupa.

The caterpillar may spend weeks as a Pupa, but inside that enclosed case something marvelous is taking place. What was once a caterpillar is transforming into a new creature. When completely developed, a butterfly emerges.

Transformation is the divinely directed metamorphosis of our minds, emotions, motivations, desires and actions from the way of the natural person, which guarantees death, to the spiritual character of God.

God wants us to consume food as well, which is the word of God so that we can become new and our skin can stretch to the limit. After a while the old skin will burst open, discard and our process of transformation will continue. No, it's not easy to transform, it will be a struggle between the old nature and the new nature being created by studying God's word. During transformation you will come up against many obstacles. The enemy does not want us to change—but we cannot afford to remain the same.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) the Apostle Paul reminds us, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

Sandra R. Scott is a Senior Social Worker for the City and County of San Francisco. She has been active in the Daughters of Zion Women's Ministries since 2005. Sandra has grown and continues to grow in her relationship with the Lord. She is the proud parent of one daughter, Shantel who is attending Jr. College. Her passions include reading, shopping, cooking and spending time alone. The song that describes her journey is "God's Mercy Held Me Close, So I Wouldn't Let Go."

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# “S”

**For God SO loved the world that he gave his only begotten SON, that whoSOever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16 (KJV)**

This is one of the most powerful verses in the Bible, which almost everyone we encounter knows. I thought about how a smile brightens ones day, then about words that begin with the letter “S” in the Bible and how powerful they are in our lives. In Genesis 1-3, we read that the Spirit of God moved upon the waters and God began creating the Heavens and the Earth. We find the letter “S” in words like seas, seed, signs, seasons, stars, shall, serpent (Satan), sorrow, sweat, she and the worst of all is Sin. All these words play significant parts in our lives today. We use the water from the sea to help make the seeds we plant grow. We enjoy signs which help us with our directions, the change of seasons and the beauty each brings. We enjoy the beauty of the stars in the sky at night. Sweat can be good for us when we are trying to loose weight, but bad when the weather is hot, we are working too hard, or if a serpent frightens us.

After Eve SINNED, she involved Adam in her wrongdoing. This was the beginning of SIN and SORROW because they disobeyed God. Adam and Eve’s disobedience affected all creation including the environment. There are consequences for our sins. For the wages of Sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23).

These are a few “S” words in the New Testament that should make us SMILE, SON, SALVATION, SAVIOR, SANCTIFIED, SAVED, SCRIPTURE, SEALED, SECURE, SPIRIT, SAUL (PAUL) AND SUFFER.

Like Adam and Eve; “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), but Romans 10<sup>9</sup> says “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be SAVED.” God had a plan to defeat Satan and offer Salvation (deliverance from the power of penalty of sin) (Luke 1:67-69) to the world through His SON, Jesus Christ. “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile” (Romans 1:16).

When I think of Suffering I always think of Job, but then I also think of the life of Saul, whose name changed to Paul after a meeting with Jesus on the Damascus Road. Although we have aches, pains, loss of love ones and so on; we have the freedom of prayer and service to God. We cannot come close to the comparisons of suffering that early Christians experienced. Paul teaches a very important lesson in Philippians 1- 3 about joy in suffering. Although Paul was in chains, he rejoiced in knowing Christ was being preached. Paul encouraged the believers to be unified and stand firm in one spirit as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frighten by those who opposed them. Paul said to not only believe in Him, but also suffer for Him. “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like Him in his death” (Phil. 3:10). Paul teaches we must suffer for Christ.

We have been Sanctified (set apart to become more like Christ) by our Savior (Jesus), Saved from Satan, Secured in the blood that God’s SON shed for us on the cross and Sealed with His Holy SPIRIT. We have the scripture to guide us with the instructions on how to live Lives that are pleasing to God and become more and more like His SON who he gave to save us all.

Frankie Nickson

“His Name is Jesus”

*“Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of **Jesus** every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Philippians 2: 9-11 (NIV)

During the Daughters of Zion’s retreat in October, we enjoyed a wonderful and amazing time of worship. The Spirit of the Lord moved in a way I have not experienced in a very long time. In that time of praise & worship we heard an unfamiliar song that took us into the Holy of Holies. The song is simply entitled, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus” by the late Rev. Timothy Wright. When we joined the Worship Leader in singing that song, the entire room began to enter into the presence of God. The room was filled with the precious cloud of the Holy Spirit, and He moved in a powerful way!

I’m reminded of that name as we approach December which is referred to as the Christmas or Holiday Season—a time to celebrate and rejoice. There would be no reason to celebrate if it had not been for Jesus. In the song, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, He is described as Savior and Healer. John 3:16 says, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.* This let’s us know that Jesus loved us so much that He was willing to give up His glory in heaven, wrap Himself in flesh, be born of a woman, suffer at the hands of His creation and die for the sins of the world. I don’t know of a person alive today who would be willing to die for those who have transgressed against him or her. The word of God says it best in Romans 5: 6-8 (NIV), *“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Jesus is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew name Joshua (Yeshua) which means God is Salvation. Jesus is not only our Savior but is also our Deliverer. He delivered us from the bondage of sin, and whom the Son sets free is free indeed (John 8:36). Only at the name of Jesus can sinners become saints, can the weak become strong and the distressed can receive peace in the midst of a storm. There is power in the name of Jesus! Demons tremble at His name, the dead receive life, and the hungry and thirsty receive bread and water in His name.

Let’s not conform to the world’s idea of how we should celebrate this Christmas Season. It’s not about receiving gifts; it’s about Jesus. Let’s remember and never forget JESUS who gave all He had so we might gain eternal life. Jesus is the only name I want to call when I’m distressed or troubled. Yes, it’s Jesus, Jesus, Jesus (Savior, Healer, Deliverer)—the sweetest name I know.

Let’s celebrate that wonderful name!!!

In His Service,

Minister Shirley Freeman  
Founder/President

## **“How to Cope with Rejection”**

*“He was despised and rejected and forsaken by men, a man of sorrows and pains, and acquainted with grief and sickness; and like one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we did not appreciate His worth or have any esteem for Him.” (Isaiah 53:3)*

Have you ever been rejected? Perhaps you didn't get the job or promotion you thought you deserved or were betrayed by a spouse, close friend or family member. Some may have been abandoned or neglected by a parent or parents. Maybe you've felt the sting of rejection due to racial or gender bias, or because of your social/economic status. You may have even felt rejection from your religious community. There may be someone reading this article right now who is currently coping with feelings of rejection. My desire is to encourage you with the word of God, so you will begin to see yourself as God does.

*The word rejection means to be cast aside; to be thrown away as having no value (worthless). To be rejected means being told, “I don't want you – you have no value.”*

Jesus was rejected by the religious leaders of His day (Pharisees & Sadducees), those in His hometown of Nazareth, and others who should have welcomed His ministry. Instead, they rejected His teachings—spoke evil of Him—made false accusations against Him—and began to plot His demise. This was prophesied in Isaiah 53. The scripture says He (Jesus) would be rejected and forsaken by men—He would be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The scripture continues to say, He would be despised and unappreciated. To despise means to regard *with contempt, distaste, disgust, or disdain; scorn; to loathe*. Can you imagine how Jesus, our Creator and Savior felt being rejected by those He created?

*In order for roots to grow, a seed must be planted in a certain kind of ground. It is this ground that is the source of the rejection that plague us. The source of rejection is Satan. It began in the garden.*

### **The Root of Rejection:**

- Divorce or unfaithfulness in marriage
- Betrayal
- Undesired Singleness
- Unfair comparisons/Criticism
- Abuse—physical, emotional, verbal, spiritual
- Adoption
- Abandonment
- A one-sided relationship (affection that is not reciprocated)

*(One of the hardest things to do is to witness someone you love—loving someone else).*

*The fruit of rejection can be defined as the product or result of something. When a seed is sown, it will root into the ground, and when it is mature, it will produce a seed bearing body, usually above ground. The fruit of rejection may manifest itself in either outward visible behaviors or hidden inward ways.*

### **The Fruit of Rejection:**

- Anger/Bitterness
- Rebellion

- Competitiveness
- Fear of failure
- Jealousy
- Distrust
- Poor self-image
- Escapism—including drug abuse and sexual promiscuity
- Defensiveness

**The Remedy:**

The key to healing the spirit of rejection lies in Jesus. We need to consider how He handled and identified with rejection from the beginning of His life through to His death on the cross. It has been said that Jesus was the most rejected person who ever lived. Yet He never allowed rejection to overcome or control Him. Rejection’s fruit were never manifested through Him, because its roots were not allowed to take hold.

Don’t waste your time responding to your critics or trying to convince them that you are valuable. Follow Jesus’ example and remain focused on your purpose and mission. Jesus was humiliated, suffered both physically and emotionally, and experienced rejection while on earth—yet He remained faithful. He did all this because of His great love for us. Begin studying and memorizing God’s word. Remind yourself of His precious promises. Allow the word to penetrate deep in your heart and take root, so when the enemy attacks you with his lies, you can counter attack:

<b>When the Enemy Says</b>	<b>You Say</b>
1. You won’t be accepted.	I’m accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6)
2. No one loves you.	Jesus loved me enough to die for me. (John 15:13)
3. You won’t be chosen.	I was handpicked by God. (John 15: 16)
4. You are not physically appealing. You are too dark, too light, too thick, too thin, too short or too tall.	I’ve been fearfully and wonderfully made. (Psalm 139: 14). When God made me He said it was good. (Genesis 1:31)

Remember, we are powerless to control what others say or feel about us, but we can determine that we will not allow their actions or opinions to determine our self-worth. If someone does not appreciate how valuable you are—it’s not your problem—it’s theirs.

In His Service,

Minister Shirley Freeman  
 Founder/President





## **“How Well Do You Wait?”**

**Scripture References: Psalm 27: 14, 37: 7, 40: 1-7, Isaiah 40: 31, Acts 1: 4-8**

One of the hardest things we all have to do in life is wait. Some years ago Juanita Bynum recorded a song entitled, “I Don’t Mind Waiting.” But most people I know, including myself, do not enjoy waiting. We desire instant gratification; wanting everything right now! Some wait on God to move in the same manner a person may wait for a bus that’s late; pacing back and forth or sitting with arms folded, and legs crossed while checking the time every minute. How well do you wait when it seems God is delayed in coming?

### **Waiting requires trust:**

David begins Psalm 40 by stating, “I waited patiently for the Lord.” God is not moved by our impatience. In truth it may prolong the waiting period. Waiting on the Lord does not imply passive waiting, laziness or indifference. Waiting patiently means I have every confidence in God’s timing and His purpose. So I won’t fret, become anxious or take matters into my own hands. One will never wait patiently on God without first trusting Him.

In James 1: 3 we are told that testing produces patience. Waiting on the Lord while we are going through trials helps us grow in our faith and relationship with Him. Many of us can share stories of times we were forced to wait even when we deemed the situation to be urgent. We wondered if God knew or even cared about our situation—only to discover that God not only cared, but that His timing was perfect. The Bible gives us many examples of those who waited on the Lord:

- Abraham waited twenty-five years until he was 100 years old for the Lord to make good on His promise of a son with Sarah. (Genesis 17:4, 18:10-12, 21:1-6)
- Moses spent forty years in the desert before God commissioned him to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt—He was eighty years old. (Exodus 7: 1-7)
- Job waited for God to deliver him out of all his trouble. (Job 14:14)
- Simeon was told that he would not die before seeing the promised Messiah —He waited most of his life. (Luke 2:25-30)
- Jesus instructed His Apostles to wait on the Holy Ghost; they tarried fifty days. (Acts 1:4-8)

The purpose in all of the waiting and delays mentioned was for God to receive glory for every situation. In all of the accounts mentioned there was no doubt that only God was responsible for the results. God has a purpose and plan for all of our lives and many times that purpose involves waiting. Romans 8:28 tells us that God causes all things to work out for the good of those who love God, and those who are called, according to His purpose.

### **Waiting requires obedience:**

During King Saul’s second reign he encountered a situation that would change the course of his kingdom. Saul was instructed to wait for seven days for the Prophet Samuel to arrive to offer sacrifices to the Lord before going into battle. Saul was going into battle with the Philistine army and needed the blessing of the Lord to defeat them. However, Samuel’s arrival was delayed which caused Saul to doubt and fear. Saul was focused on the circumstances surrounding him instead of focusing on his God who could solve them. His men began to desert him daily which caused Saul to

become anxious. Samuel's delay proved that King Saul did not have total trust in God. He had more faith in his enemy's strength than the power of the Almighty God.

Saul's blatant disobedience and disrespect for God's rules (Saul was King but began to operate in the office of Priest- 1 Samuel 13:1-10) resulted in him losing his kingdom forever. Instead of leading the people by example, by showing unwavering faith, he succumbed to his own fears and began operating in the flesh. God does not care about our sacrifice—He desires obedience above all else (1 Samuel 15: 22). Saul's actions should serve as a lesson for all of us who are waiting on the Lord. Never take matters into your own hands or rely on human ability. If God said wait, then wait!

### **How Should We Wait?**

1. *Confidently* – Knowing that the God we serve is faithful, trustworthy and cannot lie (it's not in His nature). God always keeps His promises! He is also omnipotent which means He is all powerful. There is nothing too hard or impossible for Him to do. He is not bound or limited by anything or any one. Whatever He promised, He will surely bring it to pass. (Numbers 23:19, 2 Peter 3:9)
2. *Patiently* – Never try to rush God—it won't work! Rest in Him knowing that He has your best interest at heart and will visit your situation in the fullness of time. Impatience causes us to take matters into our own hands and rely on human strength rather than God's. Remember Sarah. (Genesis 16: 1-5)
3. *Expectantly* – Expect God to move on your behalf at the right time. God is always moved by our faith and trust in Him. Hebrews 11:6 tells us, 'Without faith it's impossible to please God.' In Hebrews 11: 36-40 we are told of believers who were martyred for their faith. They died still looking for the promise because they knew that God who promised it was faithful.

I'm still expecting God to fulfill some of His promises to me for over fifteen years. Trusting that in the fullness of time, He will bring it to pass.

How well do you wait? Do you wait confidently, patiently, and expectantly—or are you fearful, impatient and doubtful? What have you been waiting for God to do in your life? Are you waiting for your marriage to be restored, financial stability, physical healing, the salvation of a love one, a godly spouse or a job? Whatever you do, please don't lose heart and give up on God. He is aware of what you need and when you are ready to receive it. Your breakthrough or deliverance is closer than you think. Continue to trust Him to come through for you, even when the situation appears hopeless. "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD." (Psalm 27:14)

In His Service,

Minister Shirley Freeman

## “Forgiveness“

According to Webster’s dictionary to Forgive is to cease to feel resentment against an offender: To pardon one’s enemies; To grant relief from payment of a debt. In conclusion, to grant forgiveness.

Now that we know what the word means, how do we incorporate forgiveness into our lives? More importantly, why should we forgive? Then, what happens if we don’t? If we answer the why first, we will have the foundation to adequately deal with the other two ... the how and the what.

The answer to why is quite simply - The Love of God.

The reason we should Forgive, according to Jesus is out of our love for Him. In (Matthew 22: 37-40) Jesus teaches us---- by identifying the two most important laws to a Pharisees Lawyer. Quoting from (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19: 18)

“Jesus said unto him - Thou shalt love the lord thy God with all thou soul and with all thy mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”. By fulfilling these two commandments, we keep all the others -- because they summarize the Ten Commandment and the Old Testament Moral laws.

In Matt. 6:12 (Part of the model prayer) Jesus admonishes us to “forgive our debtors.” God does not Forgive us because we forgive others, He forgives us because of His enduring Mercy and Everlasting Grace. So the more we study and come to understand His Mercy and Grace, the more we will understand the concept of --“Having received forgiveness, we should pass it on to others.” Jesus also teaches us about forgiveness in Matthew 18: 21 - 35 which is the Parable of the un-forgiving Debtor.

Some of the things that hinder forgiveness are: Bitterness, Resentment and Pride, and all three produce the sin of un-forgiveness.

Have you ever had someone angry with you and you didn’t know why? You noticed that they were staring at you in an unpleasant way or rolling their eyes, and you had no idea why.

Just Like a small root that grows into a tree, Bitterness can spring up into our hearts and overshadow even our deepest Christian relationships. A “root of bitterness,” comes when we allow disappointment to grow into resentment, or when we nurse grudges over past hurts. Bitterness brings with it jealousy and dissension. However, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit He can heal the hurt that causes bitterness.

So how do we forgive?

The Bible tells us in (Ephesians 4: 31 - 32) “Let all Bitterness, Wrath, Anger, Clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

Jesus gives us Guidelines on how to restore a relationship in (Matthew 18:15 -16) “Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his faults between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. (16) But, if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, - that by the mouth --of two or three witnesses --every word may be established.”

Are you harboring an unforgiving spirit? We must confess our sins and ask God to forgive us. We can Pray: (Psalm 139: 23) - “Search me, o God and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me.” ( show me any of my hurtful ways)

When God forgives our sins He totally forgets them. We never have to fear that He will remind us of them later. Because God forgives our sins, we need to forgive others Completely and without requital.

In Earnest Hemingway’s short story, (The Capital of The World) he tells the story about a father and his teenage son who lived in Spain. Their relationship became strained, eventually shattered, until the son ran away from home. The father began the long journey in search of his lost and rebellious son. Finally, as a last resort, he put an ad in the Madrid newspaper. His son’s name was Paco, a very common name in Spain. The ad simply read, “Dear Paco, meet me in front of the Madrid Newspaper Office tomorrow at noon. All is Forgiven. I love You.” The next day at noon, in front of the newspaper Office, There were 800 “Paco’s” all seeking forgiveness.

Is their currently anyone in your own lives you need to forgive or someone who needs to forgive you?

Remember: Our Regret must be real, Our Rejoicing must be real, Our Repentance must be real and our Restoration of the relationship must be real.

We all need forgiveness; and we should always be willing to diligently seek it and give it.

Irma Williams



Irma has been a Daughter of Zion for approximately two years. She has two sons and five grandchildren. She is a retiree from Pacific Bell Telecommunication Company and currently works (a fun Job) for the San Francisco Giants and she is a caregiver for her 93 year old mother. Irma is a member of the New Providence Baptist Church where she serves on the Trustee Board, Assistant Financial Secretary and Vice Servant Leader of the Mission Ministry. Her motto is “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”.

## “Reflect, Refuel, Recharge”

Each New Year brings its own set of challenges and opportunities. Although our country is still recovering from corporate downsizing, financial instability, and many more uncertainties, the New Year offers new hope.

Some people begin the year by reflecting on the previous year, such as whether or not goals have been accomplished, resolutions kept, things that could have been done better, or dreams that went unfulfilled. Many promise to never again make another resolution, only to find themselves doing it again. As a result, new goals are made and new strategies, which will help us reach those goals, are created. The thought of a new beginning energizes and refuels us for the tasks at hand. The challenge is staying motivated and focused throughout the year to accomplish those goals.

Some of us who minister to God’s people need a fresh wind of the Holy Spirit to keep us energized and motivated. Ministry, though rewarding, occasionally, can be overwhelming, draining and tiresome - but minister we must. We recharge by getting into the presence of God through prayer and by asking for grace to finish what He has charged us to do. Giving up is never an option for God’s ministers.

What goals or resolutions are you making for 2010? Is it to lose weight again (to be thin in 2010), to get better organized, getting a better job, going back to school, mending a broken relationship, or to spend more time with your family and friends? Although all of these goals are good and noble, the number one goal for every child of God should be to have a better, more intimate relationship with our Savior. God’s desire is that we resemble His son more each day (Romans 8:29). That will only be accomplished through spending time alone with Him.

The theme for the Daughters of Zion’s last Prayer Shut-In for 2009 was “*A Transformed Life.*” (This theme will continue throughout 2010). Our prayers were focused on being transformed through prayer, being transformed by Word of God, being transformed by the Holy Spirit, and being transformed through obedience and complete submission.

During the next four months, those who presented these focuses will share them in our monthly Inspirational Articles. I know they will bless you as much as they blessed us. We look forward to sharing all of what God has entrusted to us with all of you in the coming year. As we reflect on 2009, refuel and recharge for 2010, let us always remember what our number one priority should be; spending more time with Jesus.

My prayer for all of us is that we truly become reflections of His love every second, minute, hour, day, week, month and year of our lives!

All of the Daughters of Zion wish you a Very Happy New Year!

In His Service,

Shirley Freeman  
Founder/President

“What can separate you from the love of God?”

*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Romans 8:35, 38-39

There are many things today that can cause stress, anger, sorrow, and depression. But can these situations separate us from God? Does the failing economy that may have left you jobless also leave you faithless? Or has the loss or actions of another individual have you questioning if God has the best plan for you? We all have moments where we may feel God is in the other corner, but like the loving parent God is, He places us in situations to help us grow and draw us closer to Him. His love is so true for us that He let's us experience these things so we may become stronger in faith and prepare for the battles ahead.

You may sometimes ask how one can be close to God when something truly traumatic happens. Let me share my story. In 2004 I suffered a spinal cord injury in the C-1, and C-2 vertebrae in my cervical Colum. This left me paralyzed from the neck down. I remember the entire event as if it were yesterday. It was May 1st (Sunday) and I was playing in a Semi-pro Football game. Long story short, I was in a helmet to helmet collision and rendered motionless. The initial feeling was that I had died and my spirit was leaving the earth. Realizing that I was just severely injured, I proceeded to call for help.

Some may say that moment could have destroyed my faith but it actually made it stronger. If I was where I was supposed to be (In church for 1st Sunday) this event would have never happened. I can't lose faith in God and separate my self from Him because I was disobedient. If I was close to him that Sunday I would have been far from danger. We must realize that a lot of the situations we "blame" God for are caused by our own actions. But can that separate us from God's love?

Though my disobedience caused the situation, my heavenly Father's love was still there. I'm positive because the location of the field was approximately five minutes from the third best spinal cord trauma hospital in the nation, and on that same day the hospital received a new steroid just approved for my condition. I know it's Gods love because as the medicine arrived, a minister who was just walking around came in at the same time to pray for me.

Have you ever been in despair and the presence of God lifted you? Well, this was that moment for me. As the minister left, my team of doctors entered, and told me that I would not be able to walk for about a year. Although I kept a smile on my face, for the next 15 days I dealt with no feeling below my neck and had to ask for help to scratch my nose. You lose all pride when you don't have the power to help your self.

Have you ever had to ask for help from someone who had the power to help? Who was it? Through all the struggles and pain, I kept a smile on my face. Many who visited asked how I was able to do it in the shape I was in. I responded by saying, God blessed me to keep my life. My untimely death at the age of nineteen would have placed a tremendous amount of stress on my family, not to mention a heavier burden on my mom, who was the care-giver for my grandparents.

I finally came to the realization that my body was not my own but God's. I would tell people that now my body belongs to Him and the works that it will do is the work He desires it to do. That must have been the confession God wanted my heart to make because on May 16<sup>th</sup>, I was discharged and walked out of the hospital. I was placed in a position were I needed help from



someone with more power, and instead of a man, woman, doctor, or scholar, I turned to God. He is the one who never stopped loving me, the one who always knew me, the one who sacrifices for me, and the one with the power to heal me. Through faith and prayer I only asked that His will be done and His love stretched through the turmoil and tears.

Never think that God has stopped loving you, no matter what troubles you have faced, or are currently facing, because nothing can separate us from His love. Remember, God has the power to conquer all our adversities. We must continue to pray to make sure we don't ignore that love by losing faith.

Minister Marcus was born in 1985, baptized at the age of nine and joined the ministry at the age of fourteen. He was reared in a single parent home with an older sister, and younger brother in the inner city of San Francisco. He is currently an electrician in the Eastbay and coaches youth football for middle school, high school and trains athletes for college in his spare time. Minister Moore's passion is working with inner city youth. He is on the ministerial staff at New Providence Baptist Church in San Francisco, where Rev. Michael Gilmore is the pastor.

## KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING

**Knowledge:** Possession of information, facts, ideas, truths or principles.

**Wisdom:** Good sense the knowledge and experience needed to make sensible decision and judgments made.

**Understanding:** Come to know, to realize or become aware of something. Ability to grasp a meaning, the ability to perceive and explain the meaning or the nature of somebody or something.

### -Encarta Webster's College Dictionary Second Edition

In having heard many of sermons, attended several retreats along with reading books on prayer and inspirational topics, I've learned of God's desire is to heal, to prosper His children, teach them of spiritual warfare and our entitlement as children of God. However, with all of the information provided, only a selected few covered the importance of gaining knowledge, wisdom and understanding. These three essential tools are needed to help improve our quality of life and helps to establish our spiritual foundation.

When we ask God for a financial blessing, how often do we ask Him for wisdom on how to become good stewards? God can deliver us from financial debt or poverty but unless we learn of how to be wise with our spending and investments, it's only a matter of time before we become entangled in financial bondage again. God states in Deuteronomy 8:18 that He gives us the power to gain wealth, but in order to gain power, you must first gain knowledge of what power is, wisdom on how and when to utilize it and understand the accountability and responsibility that comes with power.

Some of us have asked God for our soul mate, the husband He has chosen but how many have asked God to define the character of a virtuous woman? Virtue is equivalent to wisdom. To be of virtue means to exercise wise judgment and to provide wise counsel. In reading Proverbs 31:10-31 we've learned that a virtuous woman exercises great wisdom and grace and is greatly praised for her ability to be a help meet to her husband, tend to her family, an entrepreneur and one who tends to her community or the less fortunate. He tells us that she opens her mouth with wisdom and in her tongue is the law of kindness. Most importantly- she is a true worshipper of God. So before placing such a request, maybe we should ask God to provide us with the knowledge and wisdom on what God requires in order for us to receive and maintain such a blessing. Are you prepared?

We ask for physical healing but how many of us ask God for knowledge on how to establish a balanced diet, assistance on making an exercise regimen or ways to be healthy after being healed?

How many of Christians go before the masses, attempting to defend God and their belief with no knowledge or facts to support their points on biblical scriptures or Christianity's origins but yet possess the abundance of ignorance? God tells us in Proverbs 15:2, "The tongue of the wise makes knowledge attractive: but the mouth of fools blurts out foolishness." He also states in Proverbs 18:15, "The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge". Unfortunately- the secular world has gained more knowledge about Jesus (Yehsua) than most Christians. This has left the secular world to believe that those who proclaim to be children of God are driven by nothing more than passion and are likely to speak in ignorance. If we being the children of the Most High God, should we not be

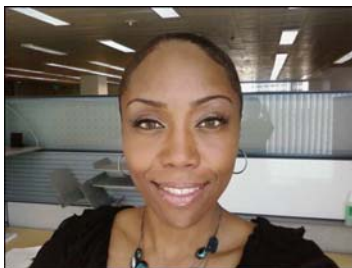
more knowledgeable, able to exercise the greatest extent of wisdom while providing understanding that even a child can comprehend? God states in Hosea 4:6, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee”. Matthew 10:16 states, “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

Many of Christians have perished not because they’re incapable of succeeding but they lacked knowledge of who God is, who they are, what their purpose is and how to co-exist amongst the secular and not become of it. Unfortunately the church as a whole has failed in not educating the children of God of these three essential tools of life! Many question of why miracles are far and in between or our inability to manifest God’s greatness like in the ancient days. It’s not a matter of whether we can perform miracles or manifest God’s greatness, it is the willingness to gain God’s truths on how to obtain and exercise the right amount of faith to manifest the impossible. It is the desire to learn of how to use good sense, the ability to know of when God says it is time or the appropriate season to perform miracles. It is the ability to perceive and explain the power and authority required to perform the impossible. He encourages us in James 1:5, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God”. He also provides us with Proverbs 2:10-11, “When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul. Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee”.

I encourage all of us to apply God’s knowledge, wisdom and understanding to every aspect of our lives. Instead of waiting upon the preacher/teacher to deliver a message, why not take the initiative to research and study the foundation of your belief, gain historical facts of Jesus (Yeshua), ask God to provide resources and information that will give you a better understanding of who you are. In order to love ourselves, to love to others and to love God, we must first know who He is and who we are by way of His knowledge. Material possessions may be tangible but it is also perishable. The gaining of knowledge, wisdom and understanding is not only priceless but a precious commodity that many are unwilling to possess. So before you go to God in prayer, ask Him of these three tools and He will provide them.

Proverbs 24:3-5

Through wisdom is a house builded; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches. A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.



Monica Courtney is a servant of God who strives daily to gain her Master’s Degree in “Love”, Self-Inventory” and “Purpose”. She who hopes to master and to move in God’s love, always working towards the betterment of herself and her spiritual walk while accepting the required lessons to successfully complete God’s purpose for her life. Her goal is to inspire both God’s children as well as the secular world, through her personal transformation and God’s illumination. She’s had the privilege of sitting under the teachings of Pastor Bailey of Olivet Missionary Baptist Church and has received great knowledge from other great ministries. She is presently awaiting God’s instructions on a new church home that will equip her for the purpose at hand.

## “Peace and Praise in the midst of Change”

There is a song that I just love because it is so true to who we are. It was written by Bernard Ighner and recorded by many; one of my favorites was by Quincy Jones. Here are some of the words (some words are omitted), “Everything must change, nothing stays the same, nothing and no one goes unchanged. A wounded heart will heal, the young become the old; everything must change.”

In the Bible we see many saints of God go through many types of changes. Some of these changes were names, moving from one location to another, marital, and spiritual status, and physical change. Sometimes even a city’s name was changed. Some changes were for the good and to show growth in the Lord, others were to honor the Lord, then there were some that was a reminder of a sin.

As humans we started the path of change from the time we were conceived in our mother’s womb. Throughout our infancy and childhood it was physical (inward and outward), such as our organs, limbs, muscles, hair, shape of the body and features. As we grew older we started to speak, understand and learn many more things outside of crawling, walking, and running.

Our minds started developing as well and our thinking process took shape. The way we learned something started to show through, the way we think started to show through, the way we process things, understood them and what we believed to be true started to show as we grew older. These things would manifest in the way we talked, walked, and lived.

Another outward and inward change was when we accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, confessed with our mouth, and believed in our heart that this is true. The Holy Spirit entered our hearts and minds and a change began to occur. Those that were close to us noticed the change as well. The spiritual change is a good thing, although it can be a hard thing to go through, I’m here to declare that if you can go through with peace in the midst and God is with you all the way.

Changing the way we think once we are saved, takes on some challenging moments. We struggle with flesh and Spirit (Ephesians 6:12). Our flesh wants to continue to live the sinful life while our Spirit man wants to live Holy. This change can be very painful in our heart as we lose friends and acquaintances, and at times family.

Ephesians 6:13-18 goes on to explain how we must arm ourselves, protecting our mind, heart and Spirit. This is by hearing and studying the word of God. There is power that you will receive through prayer and praise. So no matter what you go through while your change is coming, still continue to worship, pray, study, praise, and attend your church. These actions will aid in the changing process and allow you to go through with grace.

In the same chapter of Ephesians down in verse 23 & 24, it states we will have peace and grace, because of our love for the Lord. So continue to love the Lord and show Him that you will continue to do so as you go through. The best way to show this is by obeying His word and through your praise and worship (as mentioned above). This action will give you peace through your change and spiritual struggle.

God has a plan for each of us and His plan shall come to pass. There is a saying that I hear every now and then that goes like this “If He brought you to it, He’ll bring you through it”. Know that

God is with you through your change (Matthew 28:20 [b], Philippians 1:6), and He is able to give you peace through it all (Psalms 23:4).

God does not forget you through your time of change, even when it feels like He is not there or answering your prayers. He cannot and will not forget about you, He is your father and He loves and cares for you (Isaiah 49:13-15). We need to press on as we strive to be more like Christ (Philippians 3:7-16). Hide the word in your heart and remember it, seek the Lord, and meditate on His word so you will not forget it (Psalms 119:10-16, 49-56).

Once we get to the other side of our change, be prepared for the next level. Also be prepared to witness and give testimony, and please do not forget to give God all the praise for seeing you through. After you go through, you very well may have to comfort someone else who has gone through the very same change (II Corinthians 1:6).

So be encouraged my sisters and brothers; be strong in the Lord, the Lord our God is with you through your change. He will give you peace and is with you every step of the way (Deuteronomy 31:6, Joshua 1:9, I Chronicles 28:20, Ephesians 6:10, II Timothy 2:1).

Helen Gill-Smith



Helen Gill-Smith has been a devoted Daughter of Zion for many years. She is the mother of two adult sons (Troy and Joey), grandmother of three and the wife of Shaun Smith, who is a Bay Area Musician. Although she is affiliated with several Bay Area churches, she is currently a member of New Birth Church in Pittsburg, Ca, under the leadership of Bishop C. Carl Smith. Helen has been blessed with the gift to sing and uses her gift by serving in the Choir and Praise Team. Helen also serves in the ministry called SHE, a ministry which assists single mothers. Her desire is to bring glory to God in whatever she does.

## Wisdom in Fathers Words

Supporting Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 4:15 & 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12

Recently I began pondering over the Words of Wisdom spoken to me by men placed in my life at particular seasons. I remembered words from my natural father that would remind me of those critical moments of my life being only small notations on a page to my book of life. I also remembered words from my spiritual father that would remind me no matter what, to remain credible in my Word, Witness, and Walk with the Lord. I shall never forget the words of my heavenly Father that says He'll never leave me nor forsake me. Though there are countless other father-like figures in my life that have had priceless imprints on my heart with their words of wisdom, I have concluded that every Samuel needs an Eli. Every Solomon needs a David. Every Timothy needs a Paul, every student needs a teacher, and every Son needs the wisdom of fathers words (Proverbs 4:1&2).

We see this in Moses' relationship with his father-in-law Jethro. Jethro fathers Moses at a time when Moses will soon deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage (Ex 3-1-10). Shortly after Israel's deliverance from bondage, Moses is visited by Jethro and receives words of wisdom from him. Those words would prove to be Inspirational, Informative and Instructional.

### Inspirational (Exodus 18:9-12)

It's inspiring to know that someone who inspires you is also inspired by something you do. Jethro celebrates Moses for doing God's will but worships God for delivering Israel out of bondage. You can't fully appreciate personal blessings if you can't get excited for someone else. Learn to thank God for the advancement and accomplishments of others (Heb 3:13 & Heb 10:24).

### Informative (Exodus 18:13-18)

Jethro recognizes as a leader himself that burn-out was eminent in Moses' life. His words informed Moses that the way he's working his plan won't work. There are times when we need to evaluate those words of wisdom spoken to us by those we trust, because those words may be a matter of life or death. You might find out that you are doing way too much!

### Instructional (Exodus 18:19-23)

It's good to have a father-like figure in your life that not only recognizes success in your future but who also walks the path with you to make sure you get there. Jethro teaches Moses the Power of Delegation. Delegation can multiply your effectiveness while giving others a chance to grow.

Jethro didn't stay with Moses; he had to move on (Exodus 18:27). However, the effects of his words were life changing (Proverbs 18: 21). Cherish those wisdom laced words given to you by that father in your life; biological, spiritual or otherwise. Never forget that words that are spoken out of wisdom are worthy to be passed on to others.

Happy Father's Day to all Faithful and Faith-Filled Fathers. May God richly bless you to sow wisdom in the life of others (James 1:5).

By: Rev. Anthony Scott, Sr.

## “Being Thankful for God’s Blessings”

Ephesians 5:20 lets us know that God expects us to be thankful for all things; no matter how He answers our prayers or when the answer is not we want. Always giving thanks to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, even when we receive something other than what we have requested. His answers should be the source of our praise and gratitude.

Being thankful is to be appreciative, content, grateful, gratified, indebted, obliged, overwhelmed, pleased, relieved and satisfied.

There are so many reasons I should be thankful. I think about the many times I was disobedient yet He still kept me. When I was diagnosed with breast cancer ten years ago and was unsure of the outcome, He kept me. How can I not be thankful and give Him the praise? The doctors told me to trust them but the Spirit of God was clear and instructed me to trust in the Lord. God is the only one who can heal. Psalm 103: 1-3 says it best, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.”

In religion, Praise is an impassioned exaltation of God, Supreme Being or Creation, typically as an expression of gratitude for one’s life. There are many times and reasons we do not Praise or Thank God for his answers. Sometimes we do not recognize events or gifts as answers to our prayers. We just take his bountiful supply for granted when they come. God knows our needs but we often focus on our wants.

God healed me both physically and emotionally and gave me another chance. I’m more grateful than words can express. The following scriptures help to express my love and gratitude for God’s manifold blessings:

PSALM 118:17 says: “I will not die, but I will live to tell what the Lord has done.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5: 16-18 tells us: To be joyful always, pray continuously, giving thanks in all circumstances for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

PSALM 118: 1-2 tells us: Give thanks to the Lord: for he is God, His love endures forever.

PSALM 117: 1-2 tells us: Praise the Lord, all you nations: extol him, all you people. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Praise the Lord everyone and be grateful!!

Sandra R. Scott

## “Seeing the Invisible”

*“And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”*

(2 Kings 6:17)

My brother lost a high-paying Teamsters Union job more than five years ago. He fought the company for years to win reinstatement and lost. He got to know the Lord better during the many legal consultations, depositions and hearings. On the long road to a final decision he learned a lot. He learned that surrendering to God made him strong. He didn't always like what he learned, and he would get a bit animated when sharing negative information from his former company. But, he always concluded the conversation with, “I just want to go back to work on a Teamsters job and earn my pension.”

Even after my brother lost his appeal, he continued searching for a Teamsters job to add to the seniority he had accrued. He took lesser-paying, non-union jobs to meet expenses. All the while, he talked about contacting employers and submitting applications for various Teamsters Union jobs. He asked me, and probably everyone else, to let him know if we ran across a Teamsters job. He was willing to relocate for the right job.

Recently, I talked to my brother after attending a forum honoring visionary women leaders. Again, he talked about getting a Teamsters job and adding to his pension. It struck me that my brother was a true visionary. He continuously saw himself getting a Teamsters job. His actions and his conversation revolved around his vision. He planned for and pursued making the vision a reality. Last week I received a message from my brother that he had started a new job with a Teamsters employer.

My brother's story reminds me of the Prophet Elisha's experience in Dothan. Elisha was also a visionary. Conflict followed Elisha everywhere he went. With God-given insight, Elisha kept the Israeli army ahead of the Aramean raids. The King of Aram, frustrated by Elisha's supernatural breaches of his military intelligence, sent an army to capture Elisha. While in Dothan, Elisha's servant woke up to see the whole city under Aramean's control. In a frenzy the servant asked Elisha “What are we going to do?” Elisha was not bothered by the circumstances at all. He reminded the servant that the odds were against the enemy. After telling his servant not to worry, Elisha asked God to “open his eyes so he may see.” He prayed for his servant to have a vision. The servant required a vision to relieve his fear. He required a vision to follow Elisha's escape plan. He required a vision to take a lead role in diverting the enemy to a trap. In response to Elisha's prayer, God allowed the servant to see legions of angels fully prepared for battle and surrounding the Aramean army. With this vision, Elisha and his servant led the blinded Arameans to the Israeli army to be captured. It was a masterful escape.

I often think about how changing circumstances, achieving goals, and even, daily living, require a vision. The vision may be a simple focus like my brother's or a visual representation like that of Elisha's servant. The bigger the challenge we face, the clearer the vision necessary to motive and sustain us until we reach the point of success. The vision that my brother had for getting a Teamsters job kept him job hunting for five years. The vision that Elisha's servant saw eliminated his fear and enabled him to confront the Arameans. Vision gives the visionary the ability to look beyond the situation and see the success.

Every task, every mission, every goal comes with opportunity to receive God-given vision. Anyone can pray for vision in the middle of troubling and confusing circumstances, or when setting goals.



In this sense, having vision is the same as having faith. (. . . *if you have faith as small as a mustard seed . . . Nothing will be impossible for you. But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.* Matthew 17:20-21. NIV) Vision, like faith, requires us to see the invisible (*By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.* Hebrews 11:27. NIV. *Emphasis added.*) And, most important vision, like faith, moves us to success. I pray that you see the invisible.

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Janie White loves studying God's Word. She mentors young women and is active in both her church and the Daughters of Zion. Janie thanks God for her 14 year marriage to John White. She has one biological son and several spiritual sons, daughters and grandchildren who keep her energized. Her personal joy comes from seeing others grow in faith and in knowledge of God's Word.

## “The Fear Factor”

*“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9*

One of my favorite TV Shows during 2001-2006 was “Fear Factor”. I enjoyed the show so much because unlike me, most of the contestants were daredevils who appeared to have no fear.

The format consisted of three men and three women and in later episodes four teams of couples. The contestants had to complete three grueling stunts in order to win \$50,000. They subjected their bodies to swimming in freezing water. Many had to eat food that pigs would find appalling, and still others were asked to perform high-speed stunts in cars, or walk across a tightrope from high altitudes and more.

The winners were usually those who had purposed in their hearts and minds to complete every stunt presented, regardless of how difficult it may be. They saw themselves as winners who were able to overcome any obstacle. It was important for them to be better and faster than their opponents were in order to win.

We as followers of Christ will also be presented with challenges in life that will call for a strong faith and a made up mind. All of us have felt the gripping effects of fear at one time or another. A phobia is defined as a persistent, irrational fear of a specific object, activity, or situation that leads to a compelling desire to avoid it. We have to determine whether fear will be a factor in our decisions and lives. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 23:7 (KJV), “So as he thinketh in his heart, so is he”.

The enemy of our soul will try to defeat us by creating situations that are meant to destroy our faith. He knows he can only defeat us if we allow fear to set it. Whenever fear is present, it is an indication of a lack of faith and trust in God. Fear and faith cannot live together. One will remain and the other must leave. Make no mistake, we are either living in fear or walking in faith.

The contestants on the Fear Factor Show were motivated by money to persevere in spite of the challenges and obstacles that were present. What motivates you to persevere when everything around you says you should not? As Believers, our motivation to walk in faith should be our love, trust, and confidence in Jesus. As Hebrews 11:6 reminds us that without faith, it is impossible to please God.

There is an example in the Word of God of someone who did not allow fear to deter him, although he was faced with extraordinary challenges. After the death of Moses, God chose Joshua to be his successor. In Joshua chapter one, God reminds Joshua of the promises made to Moses and encourages him to be strong and courageous. This phrase occurs four times in the first chapter (6, 7, 9, and 18). God cannot use the fearful to carry out His work because they will run at the first sign of opposition or adversity. God continues his instructions and encouragement to Joshua by assuring him of His presence, which is a guarantee

for success. God's only request was for Joshua to follow His instructions, obey His Word, and adhere to His laws.

Joshua had been commissioned to lead God's people (approximately one million) into the Promised Land. In days to come, He would encounter many obstacles and challenges, which could have caused doubt. The assignment Joshua was given was not an easy one, but he knew he would be able to succeed because God promised to be with him. Joshua crossed the Jordan during the flooding season, marched on the city of Jericho and caused its walls to fall, and defeated many of their Canaanite enemies. He did not allow what he saw to determine what he believed. Joshua had confidence and faith in God, and was faithful to carry out God's instructions. The Lord kept His Word to Joshua and blessed the Israelites with all that was promised (read entire book of Joshua).

My sister and my brothers, what is keeping you from obtaining your dreams, reaching your goals, and becoming all that God intends for you to be? Have you been avoiding a problem instead of confronting it? Is it the fear of failure or the fear of success? Is it the opinions of men or women, or the fear of the unknown? Whatever the case, we need to face our fears, knowing that nothing shall be impossible for us who believe and trust in the power of our almighty God.

Feed your faith everyday by studying and meditating on the Word of God - reminding yourself of His promises. Remember, fear does not come from God, but from Satan. The Bible clearly states in 2 Timothy 1:7 that God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of love and of power, and a sound mind.

We may never be a contestant on Fear Factor, but we all will face challenges and obstacles in our lives that will test our faith and cause us to be fearful. Complete trust in God and faith in His character is essential if we are going to overcome fear and not be overwhelmed by it. Then one will be able to say as the host of Fear Factor said to the winner, "Obviously, fear is not a factor for you."

In His Service,

Shirley Freeman  
President/Founder

## “Portrait of a Godly Woman”

*“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;  
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.”*

Proverbs 31: 30 (NIV)

We live in a society which places great emphasis on physical appearances. Many people are celebrated because of their outward beauty, which often fades with time, rather than a beauty from within. There is a beauty from within which far surpasses any outward appearance—it’s the beauty of a Godly woman.

Television shows dedicated to the transformation of those whose appearances are considered undesirable were introduced in early 2000. A particular show that comes to mind was “The Swan”. This show was based on the story of the Ugly Duckling who later grew into a beautiful swan. The weekly show consisted of two women who were unhappy with their physical appearance. They were each assigned plastic surgeons, dentists, orthodontists, nutritionists, trainers, etc. to help them achieve the transformation they desired. They often received facelifts, breast enlargements, nose jobs, chin enhancement and more. These women often suffered from years of poor self image and although their outward appearances changed—their inner spirit was left unchanged and in dire need of healing.

The word of God tells us in 1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV), *“The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance—but the LORD looks at the heart.”* And in Proverbs 31:10-31 we are given a glimpse of a Godly woman who is also a woman of wisdom. Her character is something for younger women to aspire to and for young men to look for in a suitable companion. This woman is an asset to her husband—not a liability. She works hard and takes care of her household. She carries herself with dignity and respect. She shows compassion to the needy and is praised by her husband and children. She wears strength and dignity as her garments and is respected because of her character.

Proverbs 31: 30 summarizes what this woman of wisdom is all about. It says, *“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised”*. Charm can be defined as a power of pleasing or attracting, as through personality or beauty. One may ask, how can charm be deceptive? A person possessing charm can be manipulative. Charm portrays something that isn’t real. It’s pretentious. Charm used to deceive is not limited to the female gender. There are a number of men who use their charm to deceive. Charm is often used to gain favor by portraying a false or counterfeit image. It does not tell the truth—it lies!

The verse continues by stating, *“Beauty is fleeting”*. Beauty speaks of the outward or physical appearance. The world praises and exalts this sort of beauty and uses it as a standard for others to aspire to. Cosmetic surgery as mentioned previously is at an all time high. The Quest for physical beauty is not limited to women. There are men who seeking cosmetic surgery at a greater rate than women. Shows like “Nip/Tuck” and “Extreme Makeover” are popular now. We see these shows and begin to believe the lie by trying to measure up to the world’s standard of beauty—instead of God’s. 1 Peter 2: 3-4 tells us, *“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. <sup>4</sup>Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”*

Physical beauty can be there one day and gone the next. Time will often bring on changes in our physical appearances. It can also change due to illness, accident or some other misfortune that life can bring. We should not place our confidence in things that can fade away in the blink of an eye.

We should take care of ourselves both spiritually and physically. A Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and we have a responsibility to take care of our temple through proper nutrition and exercise. An unhealthy body will limit one's effectiveness in the kingdom. The problem arises when too much emphasis is placed on the external— instead of the internal. 1 Timothy 4:7b-8 says, *“Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”*

The latter part of Proverbs 31:30 tells us *“The woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”* Proverbs is considered a book of wisdom and begins in verse seven of chapter one by stating, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” So the woman who fears the Lord is wise. She trusts and honors God with her life. She understands that God is her Provider and Sustainer. The wise woman respects God and is in awe of Him. She would rather please God than man.

Sisters and brothers, please take care of your physical bodies because they are God's Temple. If nipping and tucking, pulling and tightening will make you more confident, then nip and tuck. But do not make becoming physically more appealing your primary goal or obsession. If this happens, it then becomes your idol.

God desires first place in our hearts and lives and He loves us just the way we are. Psalm 139:14 says, we have been fearfully and wonderfully made. Regardless of what the world may say, you are beautiful in His sight. Remember, charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord should be praised.

This is dedicated in memory of my mother (Bernice Johnson) who loved the Lord with all her heart and was beautiful inside and out.

Happy Mothers' Day to All!

In His Service,

Minister Shirley Freeman  
Founder/President

## “Surely, God is Able”

*“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding, abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” Ephesians 3:20 (KJV)*

Two of the many attributes of God are His omnipotence and sovereignty. This simply means that our God is All Powerful and is Supreme Ruler. There are neither limitations to His power nor any ruler greater than He. God is subject to none, influenced by none, and does as He pleases, when He pleases and wherever He pleases. His plans cannot be hindered, frustrated, altered or canceled by anyone (Daniel 4:35, Ephesians 1:11).

Knowing this gives me great peace and assurance whenever I’m faced with a situation that seems too hard to bear or impossible to solve. For whatever is impossible with man— is possible with God (Mark 10:27). The same God who healed the sick, turned water into wine, gave sight to the blind, made the lame walk, resurrected the dead, and fed thousands with two fish and five loaves of bread can surely handle my little problems.

We speak about the awesomeness of God often, but do we really believe it? Do we truly believe in the awesomeness of God’s power after we’ve suffered a great loss, after waiting and waiting for Him to show up but He delayed in coming, or when we’ve been struck with an illness the doctors cannot treat? Do we still believe God is awesome?

The book of Daniel records a story of three friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah commonly known as—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. These young men were Daniel’s friends and had been captured and brought to Babylon from Judah. These were extraordinary young men. They were handsome, intelligent, and learned quickly (Daniel 1:3-4, 17). They were committed to their God and were well-qualified to serve in the King’s court. The Bible and history both record that these young men along with Daniel were from royalty (Daniel 1: 3a).

Satan always seeks to annihilate God’s best. He looks out for those whose hearts are devoted to the Lord and tries to destroy them. But 2 Chronicles 16:9a tells us, “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.” So even though Satan is looking and plotting, God has already prepared us for the attacks ahead.

A.W. Tozer says in his book *The Root of the Righteous*, “The devil, things and people being what they are, it is necessary for God to use the hammer, the file and the furnace in His Holy work of preparing a saint for true sainthood. It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly, until He has hurt him deeply.”

In Daniel chapter three God prepares Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego for sainthood. King Nebuchadnezzar had a ninety foot gold image erected and the people were ordered to bow and pay homage to it whenever they heard the sound of music. The young men refused to bow since it was forbidden to pay homage to

anyone but God. Filled with rage by the young men's refusal, Nebuchadnezzar warned them that they would be placed into a blazing furnace as punishment. The word of God tells us that those who would live godly will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). Satan being the coward that he is often uses intimidation and threats to bring fear to our hearts and cause us to submit.

Their response to the King's threat is nothing short of remarkable. They replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (Daniel 3:16-18). These young men were committed and determined to remain faithful to God—even if it meant dying a painful death.

The King ordered his men to heat the furnace seven times hotter than normal. The three young men were bound and placed in the furnace. The fire was so hot that those who came near the entrance of the furnace were consumed by the heat. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked in the midst of the furnace unharmed. Three of them had gone into the furnace—but another who appeared like the Son of God was in the furnace with them. They came out of the fire unharmed and without a smell of smoke.

Sisters and brothers, God has not promised to keep us from entering the fiery furnaces of life—but He has promised to be with us wherever we go (Psalm 139:1-10). Unlike man—God always keeps His promises. Even though Nebuchadnezzar was King of Babylon, he was still subject to the authority of the King of Kings. Nebuchadnezzar's power paled in comparison to the power of our Omnipotent God. Our God is sovereign and therefore always in control.

I don't know what you may be experiencing right now—but God does. You may feel threatened; perhaps you are faced with an illness, unemployment, or you may feel uncertain about your future. Whatever the case maybe, just remind yourself of the power and authority of our omnipotent sovereign God. You will never be disappointed placing your trust and faith in Him.

Surely, God is able! He is able to do exceeding, abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

In His Service,

Minister Shirley Freeman  
Founder/President

## “The Gospel of the Church, Authentic or Synthetic?”

A thought came to mind as I was shopping for a suit for my son. The Clothing Store I was in had a large selection of suits. Many assorted colors, and styles, were displayed for our selection. Yet I noticed that there were suits of the same color, cut, size, style and manufacturer, hanging from the same rack, but at very different prices. Upon further examination, I discovered that the reason for this was that the material, the less expensive suit was made of was a wool blend (synthetic) and the more expensive suit was 100% wool (authentic). This experience leads me to ponder the thought, have we the twenty first century church reached a similar circumstance in our presentation of The Gospel?

Have we (The Church) in an attempt to attract more customers, made available to the world a massive variety of gospels by way of blending intellectual and social acceptability with the truth of God’s word? If so, have we not lost the warmth of God’s power, righteousness and salvation offered by and through the pure Gospel left to us?

Many Clergymen and laity alike know that all is not well in their churches. Beyond the façade of glowing missionary reports, massive membership statistics, bulging bank accounts and beautiful building there is a profound awareness that the church has in the last century exhibited little power in its effort to transform lives and grow true disciples.

Never before have there been more revivals and evangelistic campaigns. Never were there such numerous and enormous conferences and conventions convened to seriously examine the causes and cure of the lameness in the church.

Yet the bewilderment is deepening among clergy and laity within the local church. We grasp and often adopt social or liberal ideas in an attempt to revitalize a weakened church. We use words and phrases such as “**lack of relevance**” and “**organizational unity**” to explain away the lack of commitment and conviction to the true Word of God.

God’s word has never been nor will it ever be irrelevant at any time. The body which is the Church of Christ has never suffered from organizational disunity. I believe that the problem with the church today is that we have been infected, blended or become synthetic by way of teachings and habits that are more the product of human invention and tradition, then Bible doctrine and teachings.

Individuals enter our churches and during the ‘moment of decision’ make a profession of faith, and then continue to live and act like the world. Leaving Pastors to ask the question, what really did they decide? Only a small proportion of those who ‘make the decision’ ever evidence the grace and love of God in a transformed life.



When the excitement of the Pastor's last sermon has subsided, when the choir sings no more thrilling choruses, when the crowd has dispersed, when the emotional hope of the evangelistic invitation has concluded, the only thing we have left is the Word of God.

That word (The Word) must be unadulterated, the authentic and not the synthetic. Though the answer may be painful, may bring conflict, loss of members and/or friends. We must ask the question are we preaching, are our Sunday-School teachers teaching, the authentic unblended Word of God. We must insist that the story to tell to a dying world be precisely Jesus' story. We must choose the authentic gospel and discard the synthetic.



God's continued Love & Blessing  
Pastor Michael Gilmore

Reverend Michael Gilmore has been the Pastor of New Providence Baptist Church in San Francisco since 1999. He and his lovely wife of over twenty years, LaTonya lives in the East Bay with their two sons, Zachary and Isaiah. Pastor Gilmore summarizes his ministry with his favorite passages of scripture 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2: 1-2, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

To learn more about Pastor Gilmore's life and accomplishments, please visit [www.newprovidencesf.org](http://www.newprovidencesf.org).

## Transformed by the Holy Spirit

To transform- means a change in form or appearance; 2) Change in condition, nature, or character, 3) change one form of energy into another, from evil to good-negative to positive transform, convert, transmute.

If God takes an ugly caterpillar and transform it into a beautiful butterfly (which is a change of nature from the inside out) how much more does He desire to transform us? This is almost the same as the change we go through when transformed. The sin that lies within is red like crimson, but the blood of Jesus washes away that filthy stain, leaving our vessels white as snow.

I remember when I was lost in a world of sin fulfilling the lust of the flesh. I was caught up in drugs and alcohol, doing what ever I felt I was big enough to do. I had one foot in the church and the other in the world. The scripture says in Ephesians 2:2 “and us hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worked in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature the children of wrath even as others.”

It was difficult for me to live a double life style. I had to make a decision as to whom I would serve. After God saved me the Holy Spirit began His transformation process. Those old habits no longer had their grip on me and I was no longer interested in going back to those old places I once enjoyed. The Holy Spirit is truly a keeper. He kept me when I could not keep myself. He took away the taste for the alcohol and drugs that had once enslaved me. Now I was ready to submit to the authority and control of the Holy Spirit.

Transformation begins at the time of conversion. Jesus said to Nicodemus in John chapter 3, “you must be born again.”

The very first demonstration of transformation by the Holy Spirit is found in Act 2:1-4, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost.” The Spirit didn’t just fill them but He changed them to become more like Christ. The Spirit of Christ lives in us to be a comforter, a helper and our strength to help us resist temptation and overcome the lust of the flesh.

After his conversion the Apostle Paul was changed from a persecutor of the church to a preacher. He was transformed by the Holy Spirit and his life was never the same. Nothing else mattered to him but Jesus and Him crucified. He was no longer interested in the Jewish traditions or anything that was contrary to God’s wonderful and amazing grace. Paul lived out his life in service and total surrender to Jesus.

When true transformation occurs, we will be able to love those who spitefully use us, lie on us, persecute and say all matters of evil against us. It will not happen overnight, but it will happen. God’s Spirit will also give us the power to forgive. So let’s continue seeking transformation in our hearts and minds. Let us pray for strength, growth, and the power to continue to live victoriously for Jesus.

Tina Davis



Tina is married and a native of San Francisco. She has been a part of the ministry of the Daughters of Zion for approximately three years. She is an Intercessor and looks forward to our weekly Bible studies. Tina said she has no other desire but to live for Christ. She is determined to live a life that will bring glory to His name.

Tina is a member of the United House of Prayer for All People in San Francisco. She loves working with children and assisting where ever she's needed.

## “TRANSFORMED BY THE WORD OF GOD”

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“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:2 (NIV)

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To be transformed means to change in appearance, form, nature or condition. To conform means to adapt or make similar.

Romans 8: 29 reads as follows, ‘For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.’

We have all heard the saying, come as you are, but in order to be transformed, you can't stay as you are. There should be consistent, visible changes within our walk, talk and behavior as a result of studying God's word.

Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light for my path.”

This scripture simply tells us the world is dark. But if we focus on the word of God, and follow the path that has been marked for each of us, we will find it's a path of lifelong blessings and righteousness.

I always thought I knew where I was going and that I should set my own path. As you can imagine, those plans did not work out most of the times. Until I began to focus on the word of God and believed in my heart what it said—things did not change. I had to learn to wait on God, be patient and have faith in what he promised.

Some of us attend bible study ever week, we study and discuss the lessons, but still, there is no visible change. There should be changes in our attitudes and the way we carry ourselves as Christians. When true transformation occurs, someone should see it. I know I have truly been transformed by studying the word of God. Although transformation is a process, I no longer do some of the things I once did and I'm trying each day to get victory in other areas.

While growing up I always heard my mother sing, create in me a clean heart so I may serve thee. I often wondered why she sang that song. But as I began to study God's word I realized she too had issues and needed God to help transform her. If we do not study God's word and apply it to our lives, there will be no transformation.

Transformation is a process comparable to the metamorphosis of some insects. One of the most fascinating examples is how a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly. A caterpillar's skin can't stretch except when new. As it consumes food, its skin quickly stretches to the limit. The only reason it can grow larger is a new soft skin forms under the old and after a while the old skin bursts open and discards. The process gets real interesting. The caterpillar attaches itself to a twig, sheds its skin and creates a chrysalis. It now appears as a totally different insect, this strange creature is called a Pupa.

The caterpillar may spend weeks as a Pupa, but inside that enclosed case something marvelous is taking place. What was once a caterpillar is transforming into a new creature. When completely developed, a butterfly emerges.

Transformation is the divinely directed metamorphosis of our minds, emotions, motivations, desires and actions from the way of the natural person, which guarantees death, to the spiritual character of God.

God wants us to consume food as well, which is the word of God so that we can become new and our skin can stretch to the limit. After a while the old skin will burst open, discard and our process of transformation will continue. No, it's not easy to transform, it will be a struggle between the old nature and the new nature being created by studying God's word. During transformation you will come up against many obstacles. The enemy does not want us to change—but we cannot afford to remain the same.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) the Apostle Paul reminds us, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

Sandra R. Scott is a Senior Social Worker for the City and County of San Francisco. She has been active in the Daughters of Zion Women's Ministries since 2005. Sandra has grown and continues to grow in her relationship with the Lord. She is the proud parent of one daughter, Shantel who is attending Jr. College. Her passions include reading, shopping, cooking and spending time alone. The song that describes her journey is "God's Mercy Held Me Close, So I Wouldn't Let Go."

## *“Transformed through Prayer”*

2 Corinthians 12: 8-9

What does it mean to be transformed through prayer? To transform means to change ones character, nature or condition. We are transformed through prayer when we pray for the Lord to change or help us in the midst of our circumstances.

What is prayer? Prayer is communication with God. God speaks to us through His Word and we speak to God through prayer.

Why should we pray?

- The Word of God tells us to pray without ceasing (1Thess.5:17).
- Jesus taught His disciples how to pray. (Matt 6:9)
- Jesus also taught His disciples what to pray for. (Luke 22: 40)
- Jesus prayed for Himself and others. (John 17)

If Jesus prayed, why shouldn't we? Are we so important that we do not have to pray?

Jesus transformed Paul from a persecutor of Christians to a Preacher and Apostle. Some believe that apart from Jesus himself, no person shaped the history of Christianity like the Apostle Paul. Paul desired an intimate relationship with Christ that would allow him to share even in His suffering - unlike most of us who complain at the onset of pain (Philippians 3:10). I love the story of Paul because it lets us know that our past mistakes will not hinder God's purpose and plan for our lives. God will use all of our mistakes, disappointments, heart breaks and successes and cause them to work out for our good (Romans 8:28).

There is a story in 2 Corinthians 12 where Paul prayed for God to change his condition. Paul said to keep him from becoming conceited because of his surpassingly great revelation; he was given a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan, which tormented him. Three times he pleaded with the Lord to remove the thorn from him. But the Lord said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Here, Jesus did not grant Paul his request, but gave Paul an assurance that He would empower him even in his weakness.

Jesus did not change Paul's condition, but He transformed Paul to endure in the midst of his situation. When we are weak, it forces us to rely on Jesus. Paul accepted that Jesus in His divine wisdom knew what was best for him, and said, he would gladly boast about his weakness, so Christ could be glorified." Paul also said "I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecution, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10 NIV)

My prayer is that God will help me to change from doing the things I want to do that are not pleasing to Him. The Bible tells me that transformation is a growth process. Thank God, because I'm still on the Potter's Wheel; but with God's help, I will be transformed into the Vessel He desires.

When we are strong in abilities or resources, we have the tendency to do God's work in our own strength, which leads to pride. We should never rely on our own understanding and limited knowledge (Proverbs 3:5-7). Trusting in God's power and knowledge will guarantee success. When we allow God to control our minds and actions, we will be much stronger than we could ever be on our own. We must learn to totally depend on the Lord, so we can be all He wants us to be.

When we pray, remember God may not change our circumstances, but He will transform us to be able to bear it. We can join the Apostle Paul in saying, "For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Frankie Nickson

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Frankie Nickson is a Transit Operator for Muni and a member of New Providence Baptist Church in San Francisco. She is active in the Daughters of Zion, Sunday school and Mission. She loves family, friends, traveling and doing what she can to help others. Frankie's always says, she is "A Work In Progress for the Lord".

## “A Transformed Life”

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)*

Transformation means to change somebody or something completely, especially improving their appearance or usefulness; to change completely for the better.

As stated in my bio; I was 12 years old when I accepted God in my life. I experienced how difficult it was to be transformed and not conformed to this world. It was so hard for me not to do and say the things that some of my friends were doing. Now with these changes, I lost a lot of friends along the way. In 1995 I went to my 10<sup>th</sup> year Reunion. While engaging in conversation with some of my class mates most of them stated, they wish they would have listened to me back then. But the best part was that they too have accepted God into their lives since then.

I have experienced that adults have just as much difficulty in changing as children. This is when we should depend and lean on God's power to bring us through these transitions. Yes, I do know, this is no easy task. If you can imagine this experiment with me; Stand up and take a few steps in front of me; now fall back and depend on me to catch you right before you fall. That is exactly what God wants us to do.

Another way is that people conform to what most of the others do to fit into the community. We (as humans) don't want to stick out and be the odd one out in most cases, and most are very selective about how they'll stick out, if they decide to do so. Some change intentionally to fit in and others do it without thinking about it. Not one time did God say it would be easy to do so, but the reward will be that much greater.

So brothers and sisters, since God has shown us great mercy, I beg you to offer your lives as a living sacrifice. Your offering must be only for God and pleasing to Him. This is the spiritual way for you to worship. Do not change yourselves to be like the people in this world, but be changed from within by a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to decide what God wants for you and you will be able to know what is good and pleasing to God and what is perfect.

Trina Wafer

Trina Y. Wafer was born in Atlanta Georgia, but raised in San Francisco. She has two children, Lenora and Cydell. Trina gave her life to Christ at the age of twelve. She is a Daughter of Zion and attends Olivet Missionary Baptist Church in San Francisco where she serves as Director of Children's Ministry.



## “Transformed through Obedience and Complete Submission”

Transformation – obedience – submission; can these words shape our life? Romans 12:2 admonishes us to transform, or change, by the renewing of our minds (which comes by reading the Bible). Then it goes on to say, we can prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. That would be a true change.

What about obedience (read Hebrews 5:8-9)? Do we obey God? Are we too important to obey? What about suffering? God’s word says we learn to be obedient though suffering. How much suffering does it take to teach us? Can we learn the things God wants to teach us without suffering?

James 4:7-10 says, “Submit yourselves therefore to God.” What does that mean to you? “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Resist, flee, submit, draw near, purify, and humble – these are all action words. What actions have you taken? Are you transformed? A life lived for the Lord is all about transformation; changing for the better. Most people don’t think they need to change anything about themselves. I remember a best selling book from some years ago entitled, “I’m OK, You’re OK”. No need to change, we are all just fine. NOT! Look again at Romans 12:2. Transformation has several stages. One is to make sure that you are different from the world around you. God’s good and acceptable, perfect will is nothing like ours. God knows we don’t understand. He knows we are weak. He knows us better than we know ourselves (read Psalms 139).

We agree that God knows us, but do we obey and trust in Him and do what He says? The Son of God had to learn obedience. How much more important is He than us? The Son of God learned obedience through several lessons taught by His Father. He is our Father too, and He teaches us obedience the same way with opportunities to practice what we have learned. As we travel the road of obedience there is suffering, consequences and problems that affect our faith. Why, because faith is what we must have to be obedient to the will of God. Hebrews 11:1 says “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not yet seen.*” The people of Hebrews 1 placed their faith in God alone. They submitted their lives to God and allowed Him to take control.

I learned a lot about myself during my years of transformation. I discovered I had a controlling spirit. The word of God will show you yourself if you look into it. Then the ministry (DOZ) did an in depth study of an amazing book, **The Purpose Driven Life**. This study helped me tremendously. The very first line of the book gave me a complete paradigm shift. “*It’s not about you*”. The last line of the first paragraph is “*You were born by His purpose and for His purpose*”. We must focus our studies on the Creator. According to Jeremiah 29:11, He knows us and has a purpose for our lives.

I have been very sick for a while, which was a blessing in disguise. It gave me uninterrupted time to spend with the Lord. During that time I read Psalm 119 with more clarity and understanding than ever before. I learned the reason to study the Bible is to learn God’s precepts, to delight in His laws, to learn to keep His statutes, and to get understanding so we may learn His commandments. The writer of this Psalm has a true heart for God. He asked for God to direct his paths in God’s commands. He said to Him, “Fulfill your promise to your servant so that you may be feared.” That kind of fear means revered, honored. So Psalm 119 makes Romans 12:1-3 clear. The renewing of your mind comes from reading the Bible, God’s word. That is where the blueprint for our life’s journey can be found, along with a view of God’s heart for us. His love that passes all understanding is revealed in each page. The true wisdom of God goes beyond mere accumulation of knowledge: it is applying that knowledge in a life changing way. Living by God’s precepts does not inhibit us or restrict us in any way. Instead, it frees us to be what God designed us to be.

My life is being transformed daily through the studying of God's word, through suffering, and through life lessons. I am learning to draw nearer to the Lord and to submit to His will. The Lord God is dealing with me and calling me on every turn. All of that shows His love for me (Rev 3:19). I, in turn, am becoming more obedient to His word, His voice and His will for my life.

We can look more like our heavenly Father each day thanks to His great transformation process. Sisters and brothers, obey God, submit to His will, and He will transform your lives in ways you never dreamed possible.



Yvonne Scott

Yvonne is a retired school teacher and native of San Francisco. She is the widow of Reverend Willie Scott, the mother of two (Lamont and Nicole), and grandmother of three (Brianna, Jasmine and Simone). She enjoys sewing and quilt making since her retirement in 2001.

The Daughters of Zion Women's Ministries has played an important role in shaping Yvonne's Christian life for the past thirteen years. She has served for many years as the Event Coordinator, and more recently, as the Coordinator of The Widow's Mite. Yvonne is also a member of San Francisco Neighborhood Church. She has a gift of helps and is always willing to utilize that gift whenever the need arises.

## ***“Let all things be done decently and in order”***

1 CORINTHIANS 14:40

How is your life? If your life is like mine there is not always order all around you. Disorder in my life comes in many ways.

When things around me are a mess, like my work space or my living space, it is difficult for me to concentrate on fulfilling God's purpose for my life. Disorder may show up in our lives for many reasons and in many ways. Some of us were raised in chaos, unsure about everything. Others of us had the order but didn't get to see it decently modeled. How does disorder show up in our lives? It could be our home life, our appearance, even our weight; or just not attending to life around us. Our lack of order may show up in our good works as well. That may sound funny but it does happen. Have you ever said *yes* to everything you were asked to do? Do you volunteer all of your time away? Are you tired from being so helpful? If so, that is because we are not serving decently and in order. Maybe we are seeking approval or recognition or praise, or just like being the “go to person” for everything. This is not God's way, this is our way.

God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). When there is chaos God is not leading. God gives us the ability to present all things decently so we and others can learn. He shows us how to create order and direction rather than chaos and confusion.

God has given us the world He created. He put everything in its place and the order has maintained our existence from the beginning. The sea and land know their place, and for the most part, stay put. The plants, the stars, the moon and the sun all stay in the orbit God planned for them; God is in control of it all.

We can arrange things in order from the top to bottom. We can arrange things in alphabetical order from A to Z, or the oldest to youngest. No matter how we do it, we must understand God is number one! Put anything in order: *He is still first*. Arrange things from A to Z He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last (Revelation 1:11).

So in order for us to be successful, we must remember who is first, who is in charge, who is the creator, who we are working for, and whose we are. When we focus on this, we can do all things decently and in order. What we do is no longer for us but for our heavenly Father. God sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins. When we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our savior we then should strive to live for Him. Our desire should be to be more Christ-like, giving Him all the credit for our triumphs and successes.

Abraham in Genesis 14 had just returned from defeating an army, regaining the freedom of a large group of captives. That was a big deal a great victory. He meets Melchizedek and tells him all about it. Melchizedek blesses him and then reminds him of something very important; God delivered his enemies into his hands. When we get the victory or do everything correctly, we have a tendency to boast of our accomplishments. This should not be so; without the power of the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. Look back at the times that the power of the Holy Spirit and the abundant love of Christ Jesus have guided you in victory and give God the glory. (1 Timothy 1:14)

If we want to be more Christ-like, if we want our home and work place to reflect Christ, it will be neat and orderly and inviting. God may send someone to us for help with the same chaos or disorder problems. A Christ-like appearance is something that may be outward, but is also definitely inward. It is a circumcised heart, clothed with the Holy Spirit that says it all. A Christ-like servant is helpful and available to serve in God's kingdom, but wise enough to be mindful of

boundaries needed within our life. We must have time for the Lord, ourselves, family and friends. Try to remember the emergency instructions given to every passenger on an airplane: Put the oxygen on yourself before you try to help anyone else. Sister and brothers don't forget the oxygen, don't forget about you!

For whom do you do what you do? Who are you trying to please with your actions?

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