

Be an Encourager

“A word of encouragement during a failure is worth more than an hour of praise after success”

-- Source Unknown--

Have you ever felt down, and someone approached you and said something that lifted your spirit? That was a word of encouragement. We all need to be encouraged from time to time. We need encouragement on the job, in our homes, and in our local assemblies and ministries. Oftentimes there is more discouragement than encouragement.

The book of Acts records a person named Joseph whom the apostles called Barnabas, who was known for encouraging others. In Acts 4:36 Luke translates *Barnabas* to mean "son of encouragement" or "son of consolation." The original Greek word rendered "encouragement," *paraklesis*, means encouragement, consolation, comfort, and exhortation.

It was Barnabas who introduced Saul (**Paul**) to the apostles so that he could tell them the story of his miraculous conversion and how he had preached with power at Damascus. He believed in Paul's transformation before anyone else did. Barnabas recognized the potential and greatness locked deep within Paul. (Acts 9:26-27)

The scripture paints a picture of Barnabas as a kind, forgiving, encouraging and compassionate man. Luke sums up his character in Acts 11:24, "***He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith.***" Luke then completes the verse saying, ***Wherever Barnabas went, a great many people were added to the Lord.*** Wouldn't it be wonderful to have the same statement made concerning you?

Barnabas was by no means perfect, but possessed a heart full of love and compassion. His life is an example for all Christians to emulate. We are our brother's keepers, and therefore, should take time to be concerned about the welfare of others and their spiritual growth.

Brothers and sisters, do not fail to praise others' success when an opportunity arises, and encourage them when they are less than successful. Always strive to be an encourager!

Elder Shirley Freeman, Founder

“Daily Bread”

The word “**daily**” appears throughout God’s word. I do not know exactly how many times, but I know it is there enough for us to take notice of the importance of “**daily**” fellowship with God. We need “**daily**” fellowship, because when we draw near to GOD, He will draw near to us. (James 4:8.)

Fellowship, communion, meditation and prayer are ways we can develop a lasting relationship with God. However, time spent “**daily**” in His WORD is the key! It takes discipline similar to that of an athlete who trains “**daily**” to develop his or her body to reach personal goals. Whether the training involves running, swimming, dancing, gymnastics, football, basketball, or whatever, reaching the goal requires “**daily**” commitment. In addition to routinely exercising their bodies, athletes eat the right foods to get proper nourishment. They get enough sleep and drink sufficient fluids. They do everything necessary to get the body in top physical shape. Their success depends on committing to a “**daily**” routine and following it rain or shine, feel like it or not, and day in day out!

To succeed at growing or developing our relationship with God, we must exercise and nourish our spiritual bodies “**daily.**” Just as we start each day by eating breakfast to give us strength for the “**daily**” journey, we should feed our spiritual bodies too. God’s Word, the bread of life, is a nourishing breakfast for the spirit. Spiritual exercise includes running after God “**daily**” and spending time in prayer. Our spirits also get stronger by listening as the Holy Spirit speaks to us. We grow by looking to the LORD “**daily,**” and expectantly seeking strength, instructions and directions. God has answers to questions like, “What is my purpose today LORD?” and “What do You want me to do today LORD?” Seeking guidance from God “**daily**” is exactly how Jesus stayed in top spiritual shape.

Like Jesus, each day we must feed and nourish our spiritual bodies. We must pray and meditate on God’s Word. Just imagine how spiritually malnourished many of us are because we don’t eat and drink our spiritual breakfast “**daily.**” God’s Word provides the strength we need to be kind, loving, patient, thoughtful, gentle, meek, and disciplined. It gets us in Godly shape. We cannot do it on our own strength. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Give us this day our ‘**daily**’ bread!” We need the “**daily**” bread that is God’s Word.

We should never be complacent or satisfied with our relationship with God or our spiritual growth. No matter how long our walk with God has been, we can always seek to know Him more, better and deeper through spending time with Him in His Word “**daily.**” There are no short-cuts or easy ways to developing a lasting relationship with God and a strong spiritual body. We must JUST DO IT. We must find a way or make a way EVERYDAY!



Brinda Faye Drummer has been a member of New Providence Baptist Church for more than 30 years. She has served as an usher, worked with the Youth Department, Mission Ministry and is a former member of the VONP Choir.

Confronting the Spirit of Fear

Fear is defined as a distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, evil, pain, etc., whether the threat is real or imagined; the feeling or condition of being afraid. The only relevant fear is the fear or reverence of God. Jesus said in **Matthew 10:28** "*And fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him that is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*"

Fear can be debilitating, which means it can make us weak. It can be crippling, preventing us from moving forward to fulfill our God-given destiny. For years I ignored the call of God upon my life to proclaim His word, because I feared people's opinions. Every time the subject would arise, I would defend my decision not to go forward with excuses that appeared to be noble. Deep within my heart, I knew it was fear. In order to move forward, we must confront our fears, and face them head on. Remember, we will never conquer what we refuse to confront!

Are you making excuses for disobeying the voice of God because of fear, or do you have trouble believing what God has promised concerning your life? If so, you are not alone. Great men and women in the Bible had fear when faced with difficult situations, but managed to overcome it by realizing that if God raised them up, He would back them up!

Below are examples of God's people who were delivered from fear:

1. Moses had a fear of speaking but became God's spokesman (**Exodus 4:10**).
2. King Jehoshaphat feared impending danger from powerful enemies but looked to God for the solution (**2 Chronicles 20:1-4**).
3. Esther was afraid to approach her husband, the king, out of fear for her life, but gained strength to move forward regardless of the consequences. (**Esther 4:1-17**)

God's word lets us know that fear is not from Him. "*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*" (**2 Timothy 1:7**) So if fear is not from God, who sends it? Jesus said in **John 10:10** that the enemy (**Satan**) comes to steal, kill and destroy and that he (**Satan**) is a liar and the father of lies (**John 8:44**). Yes, it's our enemy who sends thoughts into our minds that cause us to fear and lose faith in God. Never forget that Satan is a LIAR; so whatever He has told you is a LIE.

Sisters and brothers, the only way to conquer fear is to meet it head on and replace those fears with faith. Dismiss doubts as soon as they enter into your head and remind yourself what God has promised concerning your life. Refuse to accept the lies of the enemy by confronting and conquering FEAR with the TRUTH of God's Word.

Elder Shirley Freeman, Founder

Are You Mature Enough to Appreciate Tough Love?

“. . . do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves . . .”

Hebrews 12:5-7 NIV

I recently returned home to San Francisco after the longest year and a half of my life. Little did I know when I headed for Montgomery, Alabama, I was heading for a “breaking.” A breaking is a set of circumstances or people, or a combination of both, used by the hand of God to **break the prideful, doubting, stubborn part of you** down to your lowest common denominator – the point where you cannot be reduced any further.

God leads you into a breaking when:

- ✚ He has been trying to break something negative from your life that has been difficult for you to let go of;
- ✚ You won't listen to Him regarding HOW to do something;
- ✚ You are convinced that you are right about something, but you actually have it completely wrong and don't know it;
- ✚ He is trying to show you something about yourself that you refuse to look at or acknowledge.

Constantly telling God what you will or won't do will lead to a breaking. Thoughtless words, selfish attitudes, walking in arrogance, persistent wrong thinking, continuous disobedience and hard-headedness are all things that just ask for a breaking.

During the breaking process God demonstrates “tough love” towards you, and you can feel Him dealing with you in a way that is absolutely no-nonsense and rather harsh. While breaking, you can feel tangible pressure in all areas of your life. You find yourself begging God for relief, or pleading for Him to “make it stop.” But the process keeps going on and on with seemingly no end in sight. You may experience short breaks, only to be plunged right back into the pressure of the process again.

During a breaking you constantly think you cannot take anymore, and you sometimes doubt that you're going to make it through. You may even toy with the thought of giving up altogether. You probably would give up, but thank God that His keeping power keeps you in the process even when you don't want to be kept!

You may wonder why God would want to take someone through something so painful. The popular song by Travis Greene entitled, “He's Intentional” sums it up with a simple explanation. God is working some things *out of you* for your good. You are experiencing Romans 8:28, up close and personal. He loves you too much to let you stay the way you are. The point of it all is so that God can produce more of His nature in you.

If you are in the midst of a breaking, the proper way to respond is to **humble yourself** before God. As you do this, you become malleable in His hands and He can have His way in your life. As a result of the breaking I experienced, I am wiser and closer to God than ever before. Thank God for His *tough love*.



Nicole Scott is a highly motivated administrator with 17 years of experience in the field of education, having served the children, families and communities of SFUSD for 15 years. After living in Montgomery, Alabama for a year and a half, she has returned to her hometown of San Francisco to resume her dynamic career at SFUSD! She is currently the new principal of John McLaren Early Education School in the Sunnydale neighborhood. Nicole has two master's degrees and plans to pursue her doctorate in Educational Psychology at UC Berkeley. She is also a licensed and ordained minister.

Jesus, the Lamb of God

Most Christians view the lamb in the bible in a positive manner. When we think of a lamb, the following images come to mind: humble, innocent, gentle, trusting, and helpless. Jesus is referred to as a lamb in a number of Old Testament and New Testament scriptures. In **Isaiah 53:7** the prophet compares the Messiah to a lamb going to be slaughtered. John the Baptist called Jesus the **“Lamb of God” (John 1:29)**. Paul called Christ the **“Passover Lamb”** in **I Corinthians 5:7**. Peter spoke of Christ’s blood as the **blood of a lamb** in **I Peter 1:18-19**.

There are a number of reasons why Jesus has been compared to a lamb:

- The offering of the lamb symbolically atoned for the sins of the people so that they could commune with God.
- Jesus is the sacrificial lamb whose blood atoned for our sins once and for all.
- Jesus was led to the slaughter like a lamb but did not open up His mouth.
- He is both gentle and humble as we see in Matthew 11:29.

Both Christmas and Resurrection Sunday remind us of the Lamb's ultimate goal - to take away the sins of the world. Christmas reminds us of His natural birth by a virgin named Mary. Before Jesus could go to the cross, He first had to be born. (Resurrection Sunday reminds us of His purpose.) The Christmas celebration has been substituted, in many ways, for the things of this world that will eventually pass away. The greatest gift we can ever receive is faith in the Lord Jesus. He paid a high price for the gift of salvation. The gift is wrapped and paid for in full. All you have to do is unwrap it and receive it by faith. It has your name on it (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Jesus is the Lamb of God who has taken away the sins of the world. His gift will never go out of style, nor will it need an upgrade. He is the Holy Lamb who continues to give every day of our lives!

Merry Christmas to all of you, from all of us at the DOZWM!

Elder Shirley Freeman, Founder

Entering The New Year With Hope

“For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” Romans 8:24-25 (ESV)

As we enter yet another new year, we also enter the unknown. Each new year brings countless sermons about the great things that are in store for us. We are told of the wondrous blessings and promises coming our way – including material goods, spiritual well being, and better, happier lives that are free from the stresses of the previous year. But do we really know what lies ahead?

While reminiscing about the past year, we can all think about the joys we experienced: the joy of welcoming a new life into our families, the joy of birthdays, weddings, and anniversaries. We can think about the moments that made us laugh until we cried, and the worship experiences wherein God reminded us that we have not been left alone, forgotten, or forsaken. Yet we also remember the events that made us cry and the events that hurt us to our core. We think about struggles with our own health or the health of a loved one. We remember arguments or disagreements that made us doubt friendships and re-evaluate relationships. We may also think about financial struggles or job-related stress.

As we look back, we can see clearly that a new year, and life in general, brings both ends of the spectrum – joy and pain, laughter and tears. So as we walk into the unknown, we look to the Lord in hope.

In hope of love

In hope of peace

In hope of comfort

In hope of change . . . for the better.

Hope in this biblical context means “favorable and confident expectation.” It is “an attitude of confidently looking forward to what is good and beneficial.” So it is okay to look forward to a new year, to become excited about what is to come, and to remain positive about life ahead. Paul encourages us to think positive “whatsoever things are true...honest...just...pure...lovely...of good report...think on these things,” Philippians 4:8.

As we hope however, let us remain in prayer. In prayer we prepare for loss, for defeat, and for the fight. Borrowing from contemporary urban slang I say, “The struggle is real.” But our hope is in God, and our hope is none other than our Savior Jesus Christ. So as we enter this new year, as we enter this unknown, let us enter in hope and wait “with patience.”

Minister Teoma Loeb



Minister Teoma Loeb is an associate minister currently serving at New Providence Baptist Church in San Francisco, California. Always being a speaker, Teoma was called to preach at the age of 18. She preached her first sermon at New Providence at the age of 20. Since then Teoma has pursued her education on the east coast in Washington D.C. and become a licensed physical therapist. She also continued to follow her ministerial calling in Atlanta where she recently graduated from Emory University's Candler School of Theology with her Master of Divinity degree. Teoma is happy to have returned to San Francisco with her husband, Will Loeb, and she is happy to once again serve at her home church under the leadership of Pastor Michael Gilmore.

Encourage Yourself In the Lord
1 Samuel 30

Many have faced hardships, disappointment or difficulties in life. I know I have. But my troubles seem small looking at David's predicament in 1 Samuel chapter 30. After being rejected by the Philistine commanders, David and his army returned to their home in Ziklag to discover that the Amalekites had destroyed or stolen everything that was important to them. To make matters worse, their wives and children were taken captive -- including David's wives. Devastated by this great loss, they cried until they had no more strength to cry.

David's distress was compounded when his soldiers blamed him for their tragic losses and openly talked about stoning him. No one in Israel would help him. The Philistines did not want him. Now his own men wanted to kill him. David had no one to turn to except God, so he encouraged himself in the LORD his God. (Verse 6, KJV.)

David had no one to encourage him. Everyone around him was his sad, brokenhearted and discouraged. David had the choice of sinking into the same despair that gripped his men or encouraging himself to look beyond his present circumstances. David chose to encourage himself. David chose to remember that the LORD is his strength. After encouraging himself, David asked the LORD for directions. The LORD gave instructions and promised success. David and his men went on to victory and reclaimed everything that was taken from them.

Somewhat like David, I've had situations that I chose not to share with others. No one knew what I was going through. There was no one to pray for me or encourage me. I had to talk to God and myself. There were times when I talked to others and tears would just seem to come from nowhere. No one knew my pain but God and me. I turned to God. I sought comfort and guidance in the Word. *"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope."* (Romans 15:4, NIV.)

James gives some important guidance on responding to trials. He says we should "consider it pure joy," whenever we have trials, because the testing of our faith produces patience and perseverance. If we allow patience and perseverance to work, then we will "be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:2-4, NIV.)

Just as David sang, "I will bless the LORD at *all* times," meaning good times, bad times, great times and terrible times, we must always remember to praise God for strength and deliverance. Even on our worst day, God is worthy of praise. (Psalms 34:1.) We must and can always depend on God. The LORD's strength is there for those who wait upon Him.

Encouraging ourselves in the Lord during hard times will bring victory. Just as God was with David, He will be with us when we **encourage ourselves in the Lord our God.**



Frankie Nickson has been a member of New Providence Baptist Church, San Francisco, California for over 30 years and studying with the Daughters of Zion for over 10 years. She is clay in the Potter's hands being molded into who God wants her to be.

A Spiritual Makeover

When we hear the word “makeover” many of us immediately think of one of three things: makeup, shape up or dress up. Our minds go to the exterior. While doing all three is completely relevant, improving the Spirit and Mind involves another focus.

First, let us look at makeup. A physical makeover starts with a makeup bag that may contain a favorite MAC lipstick, a Younique cosmetic kit or NARS contour brushes. But the first thing out of the bag is usually a good foundation. The spiritual concept we need to apply first is to “*Makeup*” our minds. God wants us to make up our minds that HE will be in total control of our lives, and we will respond only to His directions (obedience). Philippians 2:5

Once we apply THIS makeup to our Christian life we should anticipate both changes and challenges for which we must prepare. Applying makeup is NOT the total makeover.

Next, we must strengthen ourselves for God’s assignment to minister and grow in His word. This requires us to *Shape Up*. Physically we are in the best shape when we exercise regularly. The same applies spiritually! When we operate in Faith we exercise our Faith. We work it out. Our Faith will be challenged the most, so it must be strong. Exercising Faith means we trust God in ALL we do even when the odds are stacked against us or victory looks impossible. Faith guarantees us that He is working it out for our good. When Faith is a PART of our lives, we control it. When Faith IS our life, it controls us! II Corinthians 5:7

Lastly, no makeover is complete if it does not include a change in appearance. Typically we change or cover things in our lives that others can SEE in order to make a statement. A change in our appearance or apparel is the fastest way for others to perceive a difference in us, so we *Dress Up* for maximum impact. We need to dress up spiritually too. Not with the latest fashions, but with a changed ATTITUDE, because this is the spiritual attire seen most by others. A bad attitude cannot be covered by all the makeup, fitness or clothes in the world. People respond to our attitudes, so keep them fitted and sharp. Ephesians 4:22-24

Are there areas in your life that need a makeover? Are others seeing Christ in you?

If we want to reflect Christ more, if we decide a change or makeover is necessary, then let us want a COMPLETE process -- a real transformation. Leave the past behind with those mistakes that were wisdom in the making. Focus on a relationship with God and how to please Him, not man. Commit to honoring Him through Faith and obedience.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: **old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**” II Corinthians 5:17 (KJV) It’s time for a makeover.

By Gladys A. Livè



Sis. Gladys A. Livè is a native of Meridian, Mississippi who relocated to San Francisco in 1980. She is currently employed as the Northern California Material Manager for The Permanente Medical Group Regional Laboratories, and she has been a Kaiser Permanente employee since March 1991. Gladys is a new member of the Daughters of Zion Women's Ministries and she credits her increased Bible study time and growth to her participation in the ministry. Gladys and her husband, Julio, enjoy being the proud parents of three daughters, six grandchildren and two great-grandsons.

God Said, “I Got This!”

2 Chronicles 20

I became acquainted with 2 Chronicles, chapter 20 during a season of preparation and a time of testing. It was one of the most difficult times in my life. You see, God was going to use my brokenness to prepare me for the ministry. That season of preparation lasted approximately eight years. All hell was breaking loose in different areas of my life; and at one point, I didn't know if I would be able to survive. When I was growing up, I depended on my brothers and older sister to fight my battles. However, I realized that this battle I was in could only be won with the help of God!

In our scripture today, messengers informed King Jehoshaphat of an imminent attack from several powerful enemies-- the Moabites, Ammonites and the people of Mount Seir.

In verse 3 - Jehoshaphat Feared: Sometimes fear is our first response. The Bible tells us that God did not give us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and a sound mind. So if God did not send the fear, who did?

He set himself to seek the Lord and called on the people of Judah to join him in a fast. What are you going to do when you have no clue as to what should be your next move? Are you going to get on the phone and call your BFF or get on Face Book and advertise all of what you are going through for anyone to read and share? Seek the Lord!

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the Lord with All thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy path.”

Jehoshaphat called for a Fast: The next thing he did was to call for a Fast: **Jesus said in Matthew 17:21** that some things only come by fasting and praying. Look, if your situation is desperate enough, you will turn that plate down, fast, and seek God's guidance.

Jehoshaphat Prayed: The king led by example. He led the people into prayer. **John Maxwell** writes, “One thing a leader cannot delegate is responsibility. The leader must be accountable, trustworthy and one who keeps his word. Whenever a crisis arises, the leader has the options to give up—back up —or stand up.”

When King Jehoshaphat prayed:

- **He acknowledged God's sovereignty.**
- **He reminded God of the promises he made to Israel.**
- **He confessed that he was powerless to defeat their great enemies and didn't know what to do.**
- **He told God that their eyes were on Him.**

That was all he needed to say. In verse 14 the Spirit of God came upon Jahaziel, a Levite. They were told that the battle they were facing was not theirs but the Lord's. He would fight for them! God gave them specific instructions in verses 16-23 which would guarantee their victory.

Sisters and brothers, no matter what you may be going through, God is saying, "I got this!" You need not worry. The Sovereign God is on your side.

Elder Shirley Freeman, Founder

I Will Go Where God Leads

By Brenda Boston

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. Ruth 1:16-17

Many know the story of Ruth that is found in the Bible in the book of Ruth. Anyone who has spent some time in the Church might have heard these famous words from Ruth recited at a wedding in the context of a wife pledging devotion to her husband. Yet these words came from a young lady who had lost her husband. She promised to follow her mother-in-law to a land she did not know and to live with people with whom she was not familiar.

The Bible says that the two women set off on their journey to Naomi, the mother-in-law's, hometown. When they arrived at their destination in Bethlehem people did not recognize Naomi. She may have aged a lot after losing her husband and two sons. Also, Naomi was so poor that she had to send Ruth to gather leftover grain after the harvest. This might be like going to the food bank today and picking up food donated by or leftover from restaurants.

I can relate a little to Naomi's unhappy return to her hometown. My journey to San Francisco was a sad one. My husband, Bob, and I were missionaries/church planters in Paraguay. We were surrounded by people we loved and hoped to retire there. One morning while showering I discovered a large lump in my left breast. In a few days I knew I had breast cancer. My daughter was living in San Francisco, so the logical choice was go there for treatment. Bob had to stay in Paraguay to put everything in our home into storage. We were separated and confused by God's new path for us.

You can read how things turned out for Naomi and Ruth in the Bible, but . . . Spoiler Alert . . . there is a happy ending. My landing in San Francisco also ends happily. God led me to just the place I needed to go for the treatment necessary to heal me of cancer. Bob and I started a small fellowship in San Francisco, and we are surrounded by yet another group of loving, caring brothers and sisters in Christ. All of this reminds me of words from another Biblical woman, Hannah:

*"The LORD brings death and makes alive;
he brings down to the grave and raises up.
The LORD sends poverty and wealth;
he humbles and he exalts.
He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
he seats them with princes
and has them inherit a throne of honor.
"For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's;
on them he has set the world. 1 Samuel 2:6-8*

I am still on a journey and learning to be satisfied where I am and to grow where I am planted. Everything I have comes from God, so I will rejoice and be glad.



Brenda is a long time believer in Jesus who cannot remember a day in her life when she did not love Jesus thanks to the example of Godly grandmothers, aunts and mother. She was a missionary in Latin America for 20 years and now is serving God alongside her husband who shepherds a church in the Mission District of San Francisco -- San Francisco Alliance in the Mission (SFAM).

Brenda is also an active member of the Daughters of Zion Women's Ministries. Matthew 6:33 is her life verse.

IT WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR

Last year was an amazing year. In January I spent a week with my brother, Ron, and his family in Eugene, Oregon. We celebrated Ron's and his father-in-law's birthdays, and a wonderful time was had by all. April was my birthday. Ron and his wife, Ann, came from San Diego along with my cousin from Indianapolis to gather with about twenty plus friends and family at my birthday celebration in San Francisco. My brother and I couldn't remember the last time we were together for both of our birthdays in the same year. My birthday was a milestone. I turned 70 years old! (Psalms 90:10.)

God blessed me to check-off two things on my bucket list in 2015 – a list I started in fifth grade. In March I visited South Africa for five days of safaris and exploration. I saw so many breath-taking animals! Another thing on my bucket list was attending a Paris fashion show. I started sewing at ten years old. For years I sewed clothes, read fashion magazines, and went to Ebony Fashion Shows. I had to see the fashion capitol of the world. It turns out some of my friends and family wanted to visit Paris with me. So I postponed the trip until June to accommodate them. My Goddaughter worked with my fabulous travel agent to plan a wonderful group trip to Paris and London. Eighteen of us had a great time making lasting memories.

The remainder of the year brought more celebrations, and the year ended again with time visiting my brother in San Diego, my in-laws in Los Angeles and a little rest in beautiful Santa Barbara. It was a very good year.

Time with family and friends made the year extra special. But I always think about my greatest friend, who made everything happen. This friend has known me longer than anyone – even my mother. Really, He knew me before I was formed in my mother's womb. (Jeremiah 1:5.) My best friend put the desire to see all the beautiful places I have seen over the years in my spirit. I'm sure you know by now who my best friend is

Yes, Jesus is my best and greatest friend. He comforts us, direct us, inspire us, and even remind us of things He put in our spirits long ago. He nudges us to call or visit a friend (or in my case, accompany a friend on a trip). I may not always send a card or visit a friend when the Holy Spirit nudges, but Jesus wants everyone to experience His love. I just have to listen to the Spirit, and Jesus' love will do what is good for all.

God took me from Oregon to Africa, and Jesus travelled with me all the way. My best friend promised never to leave me. Do you need a best friend to make this a very good year? Read about the gift of salvation on our home page and meet Jesus.



Yvonne Scott has been a member of the Daughters of Zion Women's Ministries since its beginning in 1997. She serves as the ministry's Event Coordinator and Treasurer. In her quiet time she enjoys sewing, quilting, machine embroidery, travel and reading. God blessed her and her husband with two children. She is thankful for her children and she enjoys watching her four beautiful granddaughters grow in every way. Her favorite scripture is Psalms 46:10, "Be still and know that I am God, I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the Earth."

JOY
“For the JOY of the LORD is your strength”
Nehemiah 8:10(b) NIV

Nehemiah 8:10 is one of my favorite Bible verses, because I am a runner. Through four marathons and over sixty half marathons, this verse has kept me going strong! I get joy running up San Bruno Mountain where I love spending time with God honoring and praising HIM!

It is my joy to have grown up with the most amazing parents and seven older siblings. Both my parents were godly servants. As the youngest of eight, I can remember my Mother always teaching us to love and serve God. She also instilled in our hearts a love for everyone and ensured that all eight of us kept a strong bond!

I spent the first 13 years of my life in the Philippines where my Father served as a town Mayor. He was a godly public servant, and it was rare for our family not to entertain guests or eat without company. Our family of ten was surrounded by visitors morning, noon and night. The most beautiful thing of all is that everyone was welcome in our home, and our house was filled with joy.

My journey from the Philippines to settling in the Bay Area has been amazing. There is so much joy in looking at how God’s plan unfolded. (*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.* Jeremiah 29:11 NIV.) Throughout my journey the Lord never left me or let me fall. Despite challenges and disappointments – like two unsuccessful marriages – the Lord was there for me. (*And call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.* Psalm 50:15 NIV.) HE blessed me with a son, Charles, a Civil Engineer and my most precious gift! The Lord’s blessings are many. (*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* Lamentations 3:22-23 ESV.)

My greatest blessing has been finding real, true JOY, and the peace that only God can give! This JOY grows in the group Bible Study that my friend, Charlotte, first invited me to attend over four years ago. According to Nehemiah, JOY gives strength to hold steady when the challenges of life get rough. JOY lets me laugh in the devil’s face when he tries to knock me off my faith in Christ! JOY makes me a winner! For His everlasting JOY I stand amazed and in awe of God and say THANK YOU!

By Malou Sana



Malou is a very blessed Mom to Charles. She works as a full time legal assistant for a global San Francisco law firm specializing in banking and commercial litigation. Running is one of Malou's great loves along with traveling to European and Asian countries. Malou is a part-time Realtor and also a Mompreneur. Her mission is to inspire, motivate and educate people to stay fit, fab, healthy and wealthy, in order to live their most fulfilling and blessed life. Malou has hosted DOZ Ministry events and is blessed to be an honorary Daughter of Zion.

Family and Church

By: Minister Marcus Ivan Moore

And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.

But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 1 Timothy 5:7-8 (KJV)

Last month we celebrated Mother's Day, and this month we will celebrate Father's Day. These celebrations have new meaning for my wife and me, since we have just become parents to a beautiful baby girl. Before our daughter arrived I did some mental strategic planning to prepare for my fatherhood responsibilities.

I knew that time management was going to be key, especially with my position as a minister. Thinking about time management led me to my topic for this article. Many hold positions of great responsibility in ministry. However, this should not require constant attendance at the church (doing church work), while ignoring time with family. Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 5:7-8, about the importance of providing for the home not just physically but also spiritually. Sometimes while serving others we forget the importance of laying a Christian foundation at home before going outside the home.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7, also emphasizes the importance of ministering at home. This scripture admonishes us to diligently teach our children God's Word. Yes our ministry at the church is important, but God doesn't intend for us to neglect our home ministry. Paul promotes teaching our children the Word, which is a great benefit:

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 3:15 (KJV)

If we study the prophet/priest Samuel, we know that he was one of the greatest prophets in the Bible. He is mentioned in the Hebrews Hall of Faith. With his many strengths, spiritual accomplishments and great faith it, must have pained him that his two sons (Joel and Abiah) did not walk in God's way. (1 Samuel 8:1-3.) Samuel's sons were similar in wickedness to Eli's sons. Ironically, Eli trained Samuel in the priesthood. I don't know that these men neglected their children, but I believe their stories show the importance of laying a strong, Godly foundation for the family.

How can we witness to souls that we don't know and spend time with lost strangers before ministering to our own children? We must share Jesus Christ with our families. To do this we must have a good life balance that rests on prayer. Often we agree to do things without consulting God. We say yes because we're asked by a member or Pastor. But we should consult God on all decisions. Samuel missed this step when dealing with his sons. He failed to see that they lacked a relationship with God. Before consulting God, Samuel put his sons in positions they weren't ready to handle, and they failed.

We shouldn't abandon ministry because we have children. But we must understand the importance of ministry at home. Just as we pray at church, we should pray at home. As we sing songs of praise at church, we should also sing praises at home. As we proclaimed the gospel at church, we should share it at home. There is nothing better we can provide our children than a relationship with Christ that leads to salvation.

Thank you, God Bless



Minister Marcus Ivan Moore is a Native of San Francisco. Baptized at the age of 9, and Joined the ministry on his 14th birthday. He is an associate minister at New Providence Baptist Church, San Francisco, under Rev. Michael Gilmore. Minister Moore in his spare time works a lot with at risk youth by coaching and mentoring high school students. Minister Moore and his lovely wife Nyischa are the proud parents of a baby girl. He owes everything to the Grace and Mercy of God and loves Jesus' prayer in John 17.

Lord, Change Me!

2 Corinthians 5:17

If you could change anything about your life, what would it be? Would you change your physical appearance, your job or even your family? All of us have wondered, at one time or other, how our lives would be today if certain changes were made in the past. Some only focus on their physical appearance--how one looks on the outside, but God is not concerned with our outer appearance. He's concerned with how we look on the inside. He said in 1 Samuel 16:7 that man looks on the outside but God looks at the heart.

God's desire for all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is to conform to the image of His son. He wants us to think, walk and talk like Jesus. Yes, change is necessary for both physical and spiritual maturity to develop. Yet change is never easy or easily embraced.

Every New Year we make promises to lose weight, eat better, and to be consistent in other areas of our lives. However, if we don't change the way we think about health and fitness, realizing that it should be a life time goal and not just a temporary quest, we will never be at our best. We have to constantly work at changing our old behaviors, or we will relapse and go back to doing what we've always done.

In the same manner, if we are to grow in the knowledge and truth of our Lord, a lifestyle change has to be made. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation. Old things have passed away, and everything has become new. In order for us to transform, we must be diligent in prayer and must consistently read and study the word of God. We cannot afford to be lax when it comes to the things of the Spirit, because our enemy, the devil, is always on his job. He is relentlessly looking for ways to get us off track. Therefore, it is important to stay focused, and not allow anything in our lives to derail us.

Brothers and sisters, God has given us another opportunity to change the things in our lives that need changing. This time, let's be consistent, even when we don't feel like it. Read your Bible, stay on your knees, make good food choices, exercise, and if you truly desire to change just say, "Lord, change me." I guarantee He will!

Happy New Year!

Elder Shirley Freeman, Founder

Lord, Do It!

I recently listened to a song that reminded me of my pregnancy thirty-five years ago. It was a joyful, yet difficult time in my life. Not only was it hard for me to conceive, but once I got pregnant I went through a difficult nine months.

My mind traveled back to a night in 1980 while alone, lying in bed listening to radio station KDIA. The radio host played a song recorded by the late James Cleveland entitled, "Lord, Do It." The message in that song gave me spiritual strength to go on through my circumstances.

You see, I was sick morning, noon and night. Nothing I ate or drank would stay down – not even water. I began to pray and ask God to do it for me and my unborn child. The Bible tells us in Ephesians 3:20, that God can do exceeding abundantly, above all we could ever ask or think, according to the power that is in us. Although I was physically weak, God gave me spiritual strength to believe His word. I said what Job said in chapter 13: 15, ***Though you slay me, yet, will I trust in you Lord.*** Several months later I gave birth to a happy and healthy baby boy.

I pray that my story encourages women who are finding it difficult to conceive, those who may be experiencing a difficult pregnancy, and those going through physically or emotionally difficult times. Don't lose hope! Our God can give life to hopeless situations. He can heal your body and give you strength to persevere. Just ask Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Hannah. He really is able to do exceeding and abundantly above all you and I could ever think or ask according to the power that works in us.

Happy Mother's Day!

Between A Rock and A Hard Place

Exodus 14:1-4, 9-17, 21-17

“Between a rock and a hard place” simply means *to be faced with two possibilities, neither one being favorable*. There are times in life when we are faced with only two possibilities for escape from certain destruction and neither choice seems beneficial or hopeful. No matter which option we choose the consequences could be detrimental. It is at these times that we feel the most vulnerable, stressed, anxious, oppressed, frustrated, abandoned and just plain trapped. We feel hopeless and helpless to make a way out of our predicament. We lack power to speak up or keep ourselves from sliding deeper into more danger. We are like a person drowning with no way to save himself. We become victims of the raging and vicious sea waters.

In Exodus Chapter 2:23 the children of Israel faced the same agonizing feelings of helplessness. They were slaves in a country that gave them food, shelter and security. Yet, there were abused, oppressed and their children were being murdered. Staying meant the destruction of their race, but leaving meant possible starvation or annihilation by an enemy. This suffering caused the Israelites to cry out to God. God heard them and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (*Genesis 28:13*.) Like the Israelites, our sufferings make us cry out to God. We say, “**God! If you don’t make a way, it’s over.** I can’t do this anymore. Help me! I’m drowning and failing!” As we continue to cry our cries ascend to God, and he remembers His promises and our frailties.

In Exodus 14 the Israelites were between another rock and hard place. While fleeing their oppressors, they were now stuck between the Egyptian Army and the Red Sea. Everyone thought they were trapped. What a predicament where the only seeming choices were to give up and go back to a life of slavery, to be killed by the Egyptians or to drown in the Red Sea. To the Israelites this situation was hopeless. But as soon as there appeared to be no way out, God told Moses to stretch forth his rod across the waters and divide them. (*Exodus 14:16*.)

Is the enemy trying to convince you that you are trapped with no out, and your only choice is to live and die in your current dilemma? Jesus said I am the way, the truth and the life. He said I am the door! (*John 10:9*.) Jesus is the good Shepherd who leads his sheep safely to green pastures. He is the Life Guard of your soul, and He will save you from the raging waters. Jesus will make a way out of no way out. Don’t give up on God! “Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivereth them out of them all.” (*Psalms 34:19*.) Stretch forth your rod of faith over the troubling waters in your life and watch God work. God’s strength is most effective in our weakness. (*2 Corinthians 12:9*.)

Minister Kasiaa Thomas



Minister Kasiaa Thomas is a born again believer and native of San Francisco. In October of 2005, she was licensed to preach by Pastor Steven A. Bailey, of the Olivet Missionary Baptist Church in San Francisco. She served faithfully for years under his leadership as an Associate Minister, Junior Women's President and Prayer Ministry Leader. Kasiaa is a licensed prophetic minister, teacher, singer, writer, entrepreneur, and licensed Insurance Agent. She works for United Insurance Company of America in Richmond, California.

In 2013, Minister Thomas graduated from Patten University with an Associate's Degree. She is currently a member of the New Birth Cathedral in Oakland, under the leadership of Bishop Christopher Carl Smith. One of her favorite scriptures is 2 Timothy 2:15. She believes in teaching and preaching the Word of God with accuracy. Her greatest joy is seeing people restored to life through the gospel of Christ.

Most Unlikely To Succeed

1 Samuel 16: 1-13

In my senior year of high school, we voted for the student we felt was most popular, most humorous and most likely to succeed. In the case of David, the son of Jesse, there would have been another category, most unlikely to succeed. If you've ever been counted out, overlooked, misjudged or disqualified, you will be able to identify with the story of David.

God rejected Saul as King due to his constant disobedience. Samuel is instructed to go to Bethlehem to Jesse's house and anoint one of Jesse's sons as king. Jesse had eight sons, and each appeared before Samuel beginning with Eliab, the eldest. Samuel looked at Eliab and thought that he was surely the one God had chosen. He was tall and good-looking and one who, perhaps looked like a king.

God told Samuel that Eliab was not His choice. Samuel judged Eliab solely on his outer appearance. It has been proven that those who are considered good-looking, whether male or female, are judged more favorably than those who are considered less attractive. That's a flaw in human character, but God looks past all of that and heads straight for the heart.

After seven of Jesse's sons appeared before him, Samuel realized that God had not chosen any of them; so he asked Jesse if there was another son. Jesse tells him there is another one. In fact, he's the youngest who is out tending sheep. This is an example of how sometimes you will be overlooked by others, because they just can't imagine that God will use you for whatever reason. Sometimes rejection by man sets one up for a promotion from God.

The years David spent tending his father's sheep was not wasted time. It was training time! God was preparing him for the time when he would have to tend the sheep of God's pasture. David's faithfulness as a shepherd taught him to care for and protect the vulnerable and to depend on God for provision and protection. When David was brought before Samuel, the Lord said that's the one I've chosen; anoint him.

Sisters and brothers, it does not matter who counted you out. If God has chosen you, He will empower you for your assignment. The Bible says God uses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. The men Jesus chose as His disciples would have been disqualified by many.

Have you been considered most unlikely to succeed? If so, take courage. Remember, man does not see as God sees. Man looks on the outer appearance, but God looks at the heart, and promotion comes from Him!

Elder Shirley Freeman, Founder

Do You Have A Yet Praise?

The word yet appears over 600 times in the King James Version of the Bible. There are a number of definitions for this word. The one I will focus on has the meaning, **even; still** (used to emphasize a comparative).

In Job 13:15a, Job declares, "**Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.**" What Job is saying is regardless to what is happening in my life, what I maybe going through, and although I don't understand all of what God is allowing in my life; I'm still going to trust him. Job made a decision to praise and trust God in the midst of adversity. He didn't allow his circumstances to dictate what he knew to be true about God-- that He is faithful and trustworthy-- even when things are not going the way we think they should.

When we look at the world today, we find so much injustice. It seems as though some people are being oppressed, and the oppressors are not brought to justice. We witness all sorts of wickedness and sometimes wonder why God does not intervene. The same question was asked of God by the Prophet Habakkuk who could not understand how God could allow such sinfulness to continue and not respond. He wrestled with this dilemma. In the end, he came to terms with God's power, provision and trustworthiness. He writes in Habakkuk 3:17-19 "**Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.**"

The prophet came to the conclusion that God was in control of everything. He was saying no matter what happens in my life, if everything fails or fall apart around me, I will yet rejoice in my God. He is the God of my salvation, and He will strengthen me to face every battle.

Will you trust God in the midst of what may seem like a hopeless situation? Do you trust Him enough to wait, no matter how long it takes?

Determine in your heart that no matter what the outcome maybe, you will yet praise Him in every circumstance.

Elder Shirley Freeman, Founder

THANKFUL

Psalm 107:1, 8-9

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

While walking to work every morning, at about 6:30 a.m., I pass by people sleeping on the streets. Some sleep in tents and some people lie on the sidewalks. As I walk, I step over human waste and all sorts of unsanitary conditions. It disturbs me that these people seem to have nothing. They do not have a place to live that I would call a home. They have little or no food to eat. They lack money, clean clothing and all the simple amenities we take for granted. Looking at their poverty makes me thank God for the things and the love I have.

Because I work in the mental health field, I know that all these people on the streets did not choose to live out there. Some just fell on hard times. I understand that the people on the streets are just like you and me. Many of the street people have good hearts and want to find a good home and a better life. They just have some big obstacles to overcome. The obstacles may be mental illness, drug addiction, joblessness or other personal challenges.

When I look back over my life I know that I or some of my loved ones could be sleeping on the street. While it makes me really sad that anyone is living in filth, it helps me see just how blessed I am. A sidewalk could be my bedroom, but God has continued to bless me and my loved ones, and I am thankful for his grace and mercy. Real thankfulness is more than just saying, “thank you” every day. It is reflecting on God’s provisions for me and appreciating everything He has allowed me to have.

Webster’s defines “thankful” as follows: grateful, appreciative, filled with gratitude, relieved. If you think back over your life all of the words in this definition should come to mind. You have been blessed with a place to call home. You have food to eat and someone to love you. You may even have a good job. Everything comes from God. God blesses you even when you don’t deserve blessings, because of His unending love for you.

When I think about how thankful I am for God’s love, my favorite quote comes to mind:

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Melody Beattie

True thankfulness will lead you to share God's blessings with others. Show your thankfulness by blessing someone in need. Being generous with others is the work of His kingdom.



Sandra R. Scott has been a member of the Daughters of Zion for over 10 years, and she serves as the Ministry Assistant. She is a Senior Social Worker for the City and County of San Francisco. She is a member of New Providence Baptist Church under the leadership of Pastor Michael Gilmore. She is the proud mother of one daughter, Shantel, and a granddaughter, Segen. Her favorite scripture is Proverbs 3:5-6, "*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*"

The Humility of Jesus

What comes to your mind when you hear the word humility? Do the words weak, inadequate and worthless come to mind? According to the Word of God, true humility is just the opposite. Humility is often the missing link in the lives of many--even Believers. Yet, the Word of God has instructed us to be humble.(James 4:6)

We live in a day when many seek to elevate themselves, desiring titles and positions in which God has not ordained. They pretend to be humble but when faced with the opportunity to demonstrate true humility, many fail the test. The Bible tells us not to think more of ourselves than we ought; yet that is exactly what some do. 2 Timothy 3:2 says that a day will come when mankind will be proud, boastful and lovers of themselves instead of lovers of God. Sisters and brothers, we are living in that day! There is competitive jealousy, deception, and sometimes betrayal, within the Body of Christ. Some even believe that their method of worship is superior to others. **That's spiritual arrogance, not humility!** When it comes to worship, it's not ones method that pleases God, but ones motive (John 4:24). **God hates the proud!** (Prov. 16:5)

True humility produces submission and obedience. Let's take a glimpse into the life of Jesus:

- **John 6:38** *"For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will."* (NLT) **That's humility!**
- **John 13:5** : *"Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded."* (Washing feet was a job left for slaves; yet the King of kings and Lord of lords stooped to wash the feet of His disciples). **That's humility!**
- **Luke 22:42** *"Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."* (NLT) **That's humility!**

As Resurrection Sunday approaches, let's remember the humility of our Savior who suffered greatly so we might live. The following scripture says it best:

"Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross" (Phil. 2: 3-8 NLT). **That's humility!**

Elder Shirley Freeman, Founder

The Love of God

There is a story recorded in the Old Testament book of Hosea that illustrates God's great love for His people so beautifully. Hosea, a prophet, is told by God to marry a woman named Gomer, a harlot. Hosea not only marries her as God instructed, but he loved her also. He thought that she would reciprocate his love and would be a faithful wife if he treated her well and provided for her.

However, Gomer went back to her former way of living. She was not satisfied with being Hosea's wife. She went out and searched for pleasure outside of their covenant relationship. Some commentators believe that Hosea was not the father of all of her children, but he cared for them as though they were. One day, Gomer was sold into slavery. Even though she was an unfaithful wife, God instructed Hosea to go and purchase her freedom.

God allowed this humble and gentle prophet to marry a woman like Gomer to demonstrate His loving relationship with His chosen people. They, too, were in a covenant relationship with Him. Like a good husband, He provided for them. He loved them in spite of their tendency to stray away and run after other gods. They committed spiritual adultery and were enslaved on a number of occasions. Despite their disobedience, God never stopped loving them. He was always willing to forgive and rescue them. What an AWESOME, LOVING and FAITHFUL God we serve!

We, who have come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, are God's chosen people. Although sometimes we've gone astray and run after other gods, He still loves us and is always willing to take us back. He also provides and fights for those that are His. Since He has our best interest at heart, He loves us enough to discipline us. We, the church, are referred to as the Bride of Christ. We couldn't have a more faithful and loving Husband. Let's live as though we are grateful for everything He has done and is still doing. Remember, God is Faithful, even when we are unfaithful! Doesn't He deserve our faithfulness, loyalty and commitment?

There is nothing you can do that will stop God from loving you. The love of God for His people is recorded throughout the New Testament. John 3:16 is a familiar passage that is quoted often, but Romans 5:8 says it well, "***But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***" There is no greater love than the love of God!

Elder Shirley Freeman, Founder

THE PAIN OF DISOBEDIENCE (DISOBEDIENCE: REFUSAL OR NEGLECT TO OBEY)

I recalled a time I lived with my boyfriend (before I got saved) in a large three bedroom house outside of San Francisco. The homeowner wanted me to purchase the house, but that did not happen. It turns out God had other plans for me of which I was not yet aware. The more God worked on me during that relationship, the more indifferent I became towards my boyfriend. My boyfriend tried his best to keep the relationship going, because he sensed that I was on the verge of leaving. He wanted to purchase a carpet cleaner and asked me to co-sign for him. He promised to make all the monthly payments. At first I refused, because the little voice inside me was telling me not to co-sign. My boyfriend persisted in asking, and I reluctantly signed the loan documents. At the time I felt sorry for him. I didn't realize the subtlety of the enemy at work at that time.

To fast forward, I moved out the house and was served a summons to go to court about defaulting on payments for the carpet cleaner. I lost the court case and cried hot tears because I was really hurt. To top it off, I had to pay, and he ended up with the carpet cleaner. I felt that all this happened because I did not listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. I was disobedient; therefore, I suffered the consequences of my disobedience.

I recall a story in the Bible about King Saul at 1 Samuel 15: 1-35. During Saul's reign he had his greatest successes when he obeyed God. His greatest failures resulted from acting on his own. Saul disobeyed the commandments God gave him, and it caused him to lose the kingdom, which was significantly valuable. Saul's selective obedience was just another form of disobedience.

If God asked us to quickly pack everything and move to another state; change our lifestyles; minister to a rush-hour crowd on a train; witness to co-workers on the job; submit to our companions; go on a diet; or love that gossipy neighbor would we immediately obey? Would we first think about it, check with our spouses, ask the Pastor, or consult a friend? God wants our obedience in all things. He wants us to be still and know that He is an awesome God. If He asks us to do something, He will equip us to do it. As our loving father, He requires our total obedience to Him and His Word and not disobedience.



Malvia Lewis lives in Oakland with her husband and grandson. She is the mother of two children, Christopher who lives in Jamaica and Shari who lives in Washington D.C.

She has been a member of the Word of Faith Church in San Pablo for over 16 years. She serves as an Altar Worker, Usher and Intercessory Prayer team member. She, along with her sister Claudine, is over the Extreme Evangelism Ministry. This ministry goes out bi-weekly at 10:00 p.m. to minister salvation to every and anyone. She has been employed at City College of San Francisco for 28 years.

The Power of Christ's Presence

John 20:10-23

Every Christian experiences life seasons that lead to feelings of helplessness and vulnerability. Imagine the agony and the fear the disciples felt after Jesus' crucifixion at the hands of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Sanhedrin. Consider their internal conflict when confronted with the loss of Jesus' presence. Gone were intimate daily encounters with the man who walked on water, healed the sick, brought sight to the blind, restored life, touched the untouchable and washed the feet of 12 ordinary men. Now they feared saying Jesus' name in public.

Surely the disciples felt abandoned by the loss of a confidante, friend and Lord in the midst of a hostile environment. To add to their burden, the disciples had to mourn the loss of Jesus without the comfort of sharing memories, testimonies and tributes about their relationship with Him. Insurmountable grief must have accompanied the disciples' deep desire to hear the voice of the Jesus one more time. Unimaginable sorrow must have made them yearn for the presence of their Beloved friend. We too have experienced a broken heart, deep despair and a desire for Christ's presence. Nevertheless, this season reminds us that Jesus is here.

John shares an account of Jesus' first appearance to the disciples following the crucifixion in John 20:10-23. He shares the disciples' joyous response when they learned that Jesus was present. We glean three things from John's account. First, the preeminence of Christ's presence brings peace. He brings peace because he is the Prince of Peace. Jesus perfects the imperfect, and He restores the shattered. Hope cannot give way to hopelessness in the presence of the One who destroys yokes and lifts burdens. Jesus is our peace.

Secondly, the power of Christ's presence is a result of God's unending grace. Christ "breathed on them" (*verse 23*), and His faithfulness quickened their faith. When the Word inspires you, it propels you and prompts you to go forth with the gospel. It compels you to speak peace and hope that brings salvation to the lost, healing to the sick, comfort to the brokenhearted and liberty to those imprisoned by sin. Christ sent His disciples to prepare the way for a church without end. Jesus' presence is everlasting.

Finally, the power of Christ's presence causes us to walk in love (agape). Verse 23 says, "If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven. . . ." The authority to forgive means the power of Christ's ministry exists in us because of Christ's finished work on the cross. Jesus bore the sins of humanity with forgiveness. Christ's demonstration of love won the hearts of unbelievers then and still compels humanity to respond today. (Romans 10:8.) We carry the message of Christ and the Church when we work beside those who hate Christ and forgive; when we listen to the belligerent and forgive; when we touch the unloving and forgive. We fully embrace Christ's presence when we show forgiveness and love. Jesus' presence is love.



Minister Tanya A. Smith is an Associate Minister at Providence Baptist Church of San Francisco under the leadership of Rev. Calvin Jones. She is an active Bible Study Teacher for the New Members Bible Survey Class, member of the Prison Ministry and the Spiritual Advisor to the Youth Department. Minister Smith is employed by Support Circle, a faith based, non-profit, para-church organization that operates three medical clinics in the San Francisco Bay Area that provide free medical care, counseling and psychotherapy for women in unplanned pregnancies. Minister Smith is also an intercessor and exhorter with National Prayer Call, an international prayer ministry.