



SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

2010 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

National Baptist Memorial Church
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HOW TO BEGIN A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST:

First, God loves you and wants a personal relationship with you. You are loved. Second, you can begin a relationship with Jesus Christ anywhere and at anytime.

Confess Jesus as the Lord and Savior of your life. Romans 10:9 says that *“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”* By taking these steps of faith, you enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Biblical Background

“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23). As believers we admit that we are sinners, which means we have disobeyed God.

Romans 6:23 tells us that *“The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* Jesus paid the price for our sins and when we accept him, we receive the gift of eternal life.

The Bible says, *“Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:13).

LOOKING TO JESUS

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Today is Resurrection Day and on this day, more than any other, we do what the writer of Hebrews encourages. We look to Jesus. We focus the attention of our mind and the affections of our heart on the crucified/risen One, because Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected is the key to the Gospel story.

We look to Jesus who “endured the cross.” This event is interpreted by the New Testament as an act of obedience to the will of God, a sacrifice voluntary offered to make atonement for the sins of the world, a revelation of God’s love, a triumph over sin and Satan, an event of cosmic proportions and the mystery that redeems humanity. In looking to Jesus as the crucified One we experience forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

We also look to Jesus who has “taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.” The earliest Christian writings are diverse in many ways, but they are in agreement on this point: Jesus, who was crucified, is now the living Lord. The empty tomb means that He is not among the dead. He is among the living. The resurrection body means that he is now both tangible, yet transcendent. In looking to Jesus as the risen One we experience hope and assurance from God.

The pattern of Christian discipleship, the path of Christian spirituality and the way of Christian community is defined by the crucified/risen Jesus.

Prayer: Jesus, keep focused on you.

Daniel Vestal, Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship



YOU ARE INVITED TO JOURNEY WITH GOD.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU.

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REFLECTION

How have you been challenged by God? Are you willing to face those challenges?

Prayer: Lord, show me my purpose and help me to live it. Where I have unbelief, help me to believe. Where there is fear, free me from its bondage. Grant me the courage to walk in your will.

LIVE VICTORIOUSLY!

*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;
II Corinthians 4:8-9*

Good Friday is one of the most significant days in the life of the Christian church. It is the day we remember the pain and suffering of Christ on the cross as the greatest act of love by our God. He endured the pain, suffering and humiliation of the cross. Jesus, the Son of God, paid the price of sin for all humanity by giving up his life.

God does not require that we endure what Jesus endured. However, like unbelievers, we are not immune to difficult or challenging times. The difference for those who choose to journey with God is that as we go through trying times, we are not alone. The Lord journeys with us. In the passage above, the author, Paul, testifies to this fact. This is a man who was temporarily struck blind; survived a shipwreck; was falsely imprisoned; and, whose leadership was challenged by fellow believers. This man who experienced all kinds of trouble and pain did not focus on the negative experiences; he focused on the God that helped him become an over-comer.

Paul understood that the Lord is powerful. He knew that Jesus endured the cross, but the story did not end there. Not only did Jesus demonstrate victory over death, but made away for us to have victorious lives through our faith in Him. If we choose to trust and believe in Jesus, the Son of God, He gives us eternal life and empowers us to be over-comers.

Prayer: Lord, as I face opposition, slander, and disappointments don't let them rob me of victory. Help me to remember that no one can destroy what God has accomplished in me.

Special Note: If at any point you desire a personal relationship with God, information is provided for you at the end of this devotional. Believers can use the same information to lead a person into a personal relationship with Christ.

Rev. Kasey D. Jones, Senior Pastor, National Baptist Memorial Church

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BEGINNING A RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

The devotional book you are about to read is prepared by National Baptist Memorial Church family and friends. It is a project of love that is designed to be read during the season of Lent and Holy Week, which is February 17-April 4, 2010. The Season of Lent is forty days not including Sundays. Sundays are not included in Lent because on Sunday we always celebrate the Resurrection, Jesus' victory over sin and death.

The Lenten Devotional theme is "Sharing the Good News." The Church desires that this publication be a powerful word of witness that believers can use to share the Gospel. In addition, it is the Church's prayer that unbelievers who read the devotional may desire to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The New Revised Standard Bible is used in this publication. However, you may use your favorite Bible version to read along with the daily devotions. As you read you will find wonderful reflections on God's Word; thought provoking questions, prayers and space to journal. The contributors are diverse in gender, ethnicity, age and income. There are a mix of both clergy and laity.

I pray that as you read this devotional that the Holy Spirit speaks to you. I pray that you learn more about the character and nature of the Lord. May you be inspired by the knowledge you receive. May that inspiration ignite a passion for you to share the *good news* with someone else.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all of the contributors to National Baptist Memorial Church's 2010 Lenten Devotional. Special thanks to Holly Bass, Kimberly Freeman, Richard Walker and Rev. Audrey Wiggins, who helped edit this publication.

Rev. Kasey Jones, Senior Pastor

WHAT IS YOUR TEST?

...because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:3-4

Have you ever thought about how our faith is tested? When our faith is tested? Or even *why* our faith is tested?

It appears that every day, in some way our faith is tested, in the midst of both good and bad situations. Our faith is tested in relationships with our peers, strangers, colleagues, spouse, children and enemies. In a school or professional setting, tests are often given to determine how much one knows about a particular situation or subject. Tests of faith can be given through actions or words.

Without tests, how do we know where we are? How do we recognize our progress? As James says in 1:3, it is the testing of our faith, which helps to determine the development of our perseverance....

The testing process reveals how much perseverance (level of maturation, endurance) we have developed (worked towards or through).

In the midst of test, do you pray, "Lord, help me get out of this situation?" Or "Lord, thank you for showing me where I am?"

It's when we see where we are, that we can then pray, Lord show me where your desire is for me to be.

Theodra Washington, volunteer National Baptist Memorial Church's outreach ministries

LOVE HIM

Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

John 14:23

Those who love me will keep my word is a statement that is radically and unequivocally open to all people who have experienced the grace of God and have responded back in their own way. Jesus also sneaks in a challenge to those sitting around Him who all say they love Him. He says in effect, "If you love me, you will follow what I have taught. I will not leave you orphaned because I love you. Therefore, if you love me, you will not leave orphaned the ones who don't yet know the love, peace, and lasting assurance that can only come from God. You will be my hands and feet when I am gone, and I promise to send a Helper and Comforter to be with you."

We will come to them and make our home with them. You are not alone. You and I live in God's world knowing life isn't easy. But we do the best we can to believe what we have been taught, to trust in the God who lives in us, and to live our lives to the fullest, revealing the Good News to those who have not seen or heard what someone first shared with us.

Isn't it wonderful to share this journey together? What will you do to help reveal the Good News to those who have not heard it?

Mary Little, 2009 Summer Intern at National Baptist Memorial Church

WHAT IS LENT?

Lent is a period of forty days and begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on the Saturday before Easter. Sundays are not counted because Sunday always celebrates Jesus' victory over sin and death.

It is a season of preparation for the celebration of Easter. The word Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon *lencten*, which means, "spring," the time of the lengthening of days. The forty days of Lent are a time for a probing consideration of our human condition, including sin and its deadly consequences for both individuals and society. It is also a time for an equally intense consideration of the new possibilities offered to us in Jesus Christ and their implications for practical living.

The process is intended to engage persons at quite different stages of commitment. Lent came to be formed in relation to converts' final preparation for baptism. For the baptized that are active in the life of the church there is ever the need for reassessment and renewal, lest a lively faith be diminished by an increased conformity to old ways, or simply by the dead weight of unimaginative piety.

Finally, for those who have departed from the faith, "backslidden", the Forty Days can be a time for restitution and restoration.

Sources

Floyd, Pat. *The Special Days and Seasons of the Christian Year: How They Came About and How They Are Observed by Christians Today.*

² Stookey, Laurence H. *Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church.*

JOURNEY WITH GOD

You show me the path of life. In Your presence there is fullness of joy; in Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16:11

In the Christian calendar, today marks the beginning of a 40-day journey to reaffirm our covenant relationship with God and renew our faith in Jesus Christ. In this passage, the author, David, shares with the reader his insight about his journey with the Lord. The beginning of the passage states, “You show me the path of life.” David indicates here that our purpose in life can be determined and fulfilled through our covenant relationship with God. The knowledge of our purpose in life and our journey to fulfill it does not mean we will not have challenges. Believers and unbelievers alike experience pain, trouble, and failure. However, we can have and maintain joy if God is present in our lives, no matter the difficulty. Happiness may come and go, because happiness is based on situations and circumstances. Joy is established in the knowledge that believers are eternally connected to God, who holds us in God’s hands. Joy is eternal.

As we journey with God and go from situation to situation, we grow in the knowledge of who God is and how good God is to us. When we face tragedy, we find God as our “Rock.” When we face uncertainty, we find God as our “Refuge.” When we face heartbreak and loss, we find God as “Comforter.” When we face life, God is... the list never ends.

Will you journey with God or recommit your life to God beginning today?

Special Note: If at any point you desire a personal relationship with God, information is provided for you at the end of this devotional. Believers can use the same information to lead a person into a personal relationship with Christ. May God bless you on your journey.

Rev. Kasey Jones, Senior Pastor, National Baptist Memorial Church

DO YOU LOVE HIM?

Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

John 14:23

Today’s scripture puts us right in the middle of the Last Supper. The Disciples, with their stomachs nourished by the breaking of bread and partaking of wine, and feet freshly washed, settled in to listen to Jesus speak His “Last Words.” Our passage is actually a rather odd response by Jesus to a question from one of his remaining disciples: “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?” (14:22).

This query comes after Jesus has been discussing how God will send an Advocate (literally a “Comforter” or “Helper”) to the Disciples to be with them forever after He is no longer physically present. Jesus told them that “*this is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees [it] nor knows [it]. [But] you will know [it], because [it] abides with you, and [it] will be in you.*” (14:17). One of the major themes for the writer of John’s Gospel is the dichotomy between the ones who “get it,” and the ones who don’t. Jesus seems to be saying that there is a select group of His contemporaries who comprehend the relationship between Jesus their teacher, the God of the Hebrew Scriptures, and the prophetic texts that Jesus is claiming to fulfill. But not everyone can or will understand. Therefore the question is valid, and one that we all at some point have voiced or lifted up silently to God: “Why aren’t You revealing this Good News to everyone? Doesn’t everyone deserve the chance to know Your truth and experience the transformation of blessing?”

But Jesus, knowing that His time on earth was drawing to a close, responded in a seemingly bizarre fashion: Jesus turns the question about revelation into a statement of universal affection: “*Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.*” (14:23). Basically, Jesus says, it’s all about love!

Do your actions show you love Him?

Mary Little, 2009 Summer Intern at National Baptist Memorial Church

ALL GRACE, ALL SUFFICIENCY, IN ALL THINGS, ALWAYS

And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

Why does God give us abundant blessings? What shall we do with what He gives to us? What is this every good work the Bible speaks of? In today's economy if I am unemployed what do I have to give?

According to the Bible, what we give is more than service to God's people, more than meeting the needs of "church folk". Our generous giving furthers the good work of bringing the lost to Christ. Our giving causes many even the unsaved to thank and praise God. Our giving makes it hard for people to go to hell! If we are unemployed, don't have money or other material items to give; we can start by giving a prayer, our time, and talent for those in need. According to the word of God, we all have something to give for the furtherance of the gospel.

Prayer: Father, show me what you have given to me in abundance for every good work, how and where to give it. Thank you.

Vivinee' Garner-Jones
(Reverend Mother)

TURN IT OVER TO THE LORD

So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Matthew 6:34

My grandfather used to tell me that worrying is like a rocking chair – it gives you something to do but it doesn't get you anywhere. The scripture today seems to give that same advice. Jesus is in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount. He has given the group instructions about various things like anger and divorce; He has talked about giving away our money to find true treasure and told us to love our enemies. It appears that Jesus is paying attention to his audience and I am sure after all this intense teaching they were feeling a little stressed. He could tell maybe by their fidgeting or simply the overwhelmed look on their faces. He decides to give them a little break before he gets to the closing about judging others. He throws in this section about not worrying. If God takes care of the birds and the flowers how much more likely is He to take care of us? These are comforting words to hear, but challenging words to live by. Our nature is to get caught up in the details of daily life. Making money and paying bills, going to work and daily chores, attending meetings and helping family members. All these things call for our attention. It seems Jesus really doesn't know what He is talking about – or does He? Jesus knows what can weigh us down and drain all our energy. His call is for us to focus on what really matters and to actually let God handle the rest, but this advice is not easily accepted. We like to be in control and dictate to God about how His kingdom should work, instead of being a faithful disciple and serving where we are called.

What one thing can you turn over to God today?

Prayer: Lord, help us all to work to hear Your voice over the worries of our world. Amen.

Rev. Tommy Justus, Senior Pastor, Mars Hill Baptist Church. Mars Hill, NC
(2008-2009 Mission Team Leader to National Baptist Memorial Church)

MY LIFE WAS SAVED BY BODY PIERCING

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 3: 16-17

Here in casual, sunny Los Angeles, California where I live, it is not uncommon in the streets to see men and women with various areas of their bodies pierced. I've seen noses pierced, tongues pierced, eyebrows pierced, exposed navels pierced, even men's nipples pierced and all of these areas adorned with various jewelry. This type of piercing as well as the proliferation of tattoos seems to be some kind of fad.

Although Jesus was the perfect, sinless, Son of God, Jesus permitted soldiers to nail him to a cross. Nails pierced his hands and feet. He did that for you and me. He paid the price for our sins and mistakes.

If you are a woman who has been abused by a man or men in general and if you feel that all men are no good: Remember Jesus is a very good man. He loved you so much that He died for you. Think about that!

If you are someone who was abandoned by or lost your father at an early age and if you have emptiness because of that loss: Jesus is your answer. He permitted sinful men to pierce Him in order to connect you to your Heavenly Father.

Prayer: Jesus, I love you and I am remembering how you let them hurt you for me, how you let them pierce your side with a sword, you hands and feet with nails, just for me.

Vivinee' Garner-Jones
(Reverend Mother)

JOURNAL ENTRY

REFLECTION

What was the Good News that stood out for you this week?

Is there anybody that comes to mind to share this Good News with this week? If so, pray for the person and ask the Lord to give you the courage and the opportunity to share with the person.

REFLECTION

How has God spoken to you so far? What have you learned about the Lord? What have you or will you do differently?

JOURNAL ENTRY

CALLED TO ACTION

In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Acts 20:35

We live in a world of conveniences. We have microwaves that heat food in minutes, ATMs that dispense cash 24 hours a day, cell phones that work virtually everywhere. We take all this for granted. Similarly, sometimes we take our salvation for granted. We show up for church (or don't), say a few prayers (or not), shake a few hands and go home. Even though actions alone will not lead us to the kingdom of heaven, that doesn't mean we can sit back and observe. In this passage, Paul says goodbye to the elders at Ephesus and reminds them that they must continue the work he began. He describes it as "hard work," or in some versions as "laboring." This isn't to imply that we are to work until we are completely burnt out. Nor is it to suggest that doing God's work should be unpleasant and miserable. But maybe we need to be inconvenienced sometimes. There is a blessing here. There is joy that comes from giving. We are called to action, not only to make positive change in the world, but to inspire others by our example.

Prayer:

*Christ has no body on earth but mine,
no hands but mine, no feet but mine;
mine are the eyes through which
the compassion of Christ looks out on a hurting world,
mine are the feet with which he goes about doing good;
mine are the hands with which he is to bless now.
(Adapted from St. Teresa of Avila, 1515-1582)*

Holly Bass, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

GOD IS A SUN AND SHIELD

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the LORD withhold from those who walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you.

Psalm 84:11-12

Psalm 84 is in a group of Psalms sometimes referred to as “Songs to Zion.” During special times in their calendar, such as feasts or celebrations, the Israelites would often take a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They would use these songs to prepare themselves spiritually. They remembered that this is where the temple used to be. They remembered that God was there. Anticipating a holy encounter, these pilgrims sang their way to Zion.

We all find ourselves on a journey too. While our destination may not always be clear, verse 11 reminds us that God is still our sun and shield. And although, like a sun, God sheds light on our path, we often try to find (or try to *be*) our own source of illumination. We may light our own way down paths that God did not choose for us. Like a shield, God promises to be our protection but often we find ourselves building our own fences and walls in an effort to keep ourselves safe and to keep others out.

This verse reminds us that God is our direction and protection along the way and that God provides us the resources we need to reach our destination safely.

How would your journey be different if you walked confidently in the path God lights up without fearing the unknown?

Joel Baucom, 2009 Mission Team Leader from Mount Carmel Baptist Church,
Chapel Hill, NC

MARVEL IN THE LORD

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24

I think that in order to fully understand the meaning of this scripture, we have to look at the three verses that preceded it.

I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. (Psalm 118:21-23)

We know that Jesus was the rejected stone, he was persecuted for us. He was crucified for us. He was buried for us. Lastly, but certainly not least he was resurrected for us! He is the head, the crowning achievement, the capstone of the church. He became our salvation. He died for us so that each day we can rejoice about this no matter what the day might bring. We should be glad knowing that because of what Jesus did for us, each day when we open our eyes we too should marvel at his love for us. We need to remember and give God the praise and glory. This is the day the Lord has made!

Prayer: Lord, I thank You for this day. Thank You for reminding me that because You died on the cross and rose again for my sins, I am your child, each and every day is a day to be happy and rejoice in what You did for us. Amen!

Min. Linda Nakpodia, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

II Corinthians 6:1-2

Now! Don't wait! There is an *urgency* involved in sharing the Good News of Jesus. The world (including us) needs Christ and needs Christ **now**. Too much time has been wasted by too many; remember that one of the terms that Jesus used for judgment was Gehenna, which was the garbage dump outside Jerusalem. The saying "God don't make junk" needs to be made real in the lives of believers who show others that they have worth in God's eyes.

Now—here it is! There is a current *opportunity* involved in sharing the Good News of Jesus. The world (including us) can have eternal life **now**, not just later after we die. "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent," according to the Gospel of John.

Now—everything worthwhile is here for you! The salvation offered by God is incredibly deep. The Good News of Jesus is not just that a bad situation can be fixed; it is that a life of joy, peace, love, forgiveness, goodness, grace, purpose, community (and on and on) can be experienced **now**.

Prayer: Lord, we want to be faithful co-workers in announcing Your Good News. Give us Your sense of urgency, Your delight in offering eternal life, and Your vision of life lived fully in the presence of the Father. Amen

Richard Walker, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

REST IN THE LORD

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

This passage explains that we as human beings should not carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. We should let God ease our burdens. God has given us a gift—His yoke—to help ease our burdens. The word 'Yoke' means a bar of wood, so constructed as to unite two animals (usually oxen), enabling them to work in the fields, drawing loads, pulling instruments used for farming. In this passage yoke is used to symbolize the stresses or burdens in this world. God offers to exchange His yoke, which is easy, for the stresses and burdens that weigh us down. As we learn from His teachings, we make ourselves open to what God's plans are for our lives. The yoke is for us to carry but God will do the heavy lifting for us as we rest in the humbleness and gentleness of the Lord. Read God's word and the burdens will be lifted off your shoulders.

Prayer: Dear God, help me to rest in You. I give You all my cares and concerns. Please share with me Your plans and help me to follow You. Amen.

Nicori Nakpodia, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

SUSTAINING POWER

*Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have.
Philippians 4:11*

Paul knows the secret. Here is a man who has been “afflicted, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not driven to despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed” (II Corinthians Ch. 4). And, according to his letter to the saints at Philippi, he’s been broke, but he ain’t busted. As he writes, “I know the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in want.”

So in these days of economic uncertainty, when money is tight and ends don’t meet, we really need to know: What’s Paul’s secret?

The secret is Paul is full of it — full of the Spirit of Christ.

When Jesus was led out into the Wilderness, scripture tells us He was “full of the Holy Spirit.” (Luke 4:1) After forty days of not so much as a loaf of bread, he was famished (Luke 4:2). And yet he endured Satan’s trial. When he returned from the Wilderness to Galilee, he was still “filled with the power of the Spirit.” (Luke 4:14)

We may lose our homes, our jobs, our friends, our reputations. But there is one thing that cannot be taken — the Spirit of the living God inside us. That is Paul’s secret. And that’s what leads him to boldly declare, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

I have a pastor friend who every time someone asks always gives the same answer. “I’m too blessed to complain.” He knows the secret. And so do we.

Prayer: Spirit of God, fill us with your sustaining power that we might know that indeed we too can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Amen.

Rev. Ryon Price, Senior Pastor, United Church of Colchester, Colchester, VT
(2009 Mission Team Leader to National Baptist Memorial Church)

TURN TO GOD FOR STRENGTH

*but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.
Isaiah 40:31*

This time of year can be stressful for everyone. With the holidays coming to a close, we all look to the future for some sort of rest or release. Many times we look to those around us, family, friends, and neighbors, to help provide that release. We look to relationships, hobbies, entertainment, and pass-times to give us an escape from the stress of the past year coming to a close, and the intimidation of the New Year to come. This passage tells us where we are to look to find that strength. Not to say that relationships and leisure activities are bad, clearly God provided those for a very specific purpose, but ultimately we are to look to God to provide us with the spiritual rejuvenation that is so often needed in our lives. He tells us the type of joyful, gracious, and loving spirit we are to have through the teachings of His son, Jesus. This spirit so harshly contrasts with our own nature, that we often need to look to Him for the strength to be the person that He so longs for us to be. If we are to show grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness the way that Christ desires us to, there is a great need to turn to Him for strength.

*Prayer: Eternal Father, who alone canst control the days that are gone and the deeds that are done, remove from our burdened memories the weight of past years, that being set free both from the glamour of complacency and the palsy of remorse, we may reach forth unto those things which are before and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Amen.
(Prayer by Franciscan Bishop Charles Henry Brent)*

Alyssa Bennett, 2009 Summer Intern at National Baptist Memorial Church

FOLLOW MY LEAD

*Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.
Forgive, and you will be forgiven.
Luke 6:37*

Simply put, Luke 6:37 is the golden rule in action. We should treat others the way we would like to be treated. But more than simple reciprocity, this verse is suggesting that it is our spiritual duty to take positive action regardless of the situation—even if we are “right” and the other person is “wrong.” It doesn’t say to forgive, but only when it’s comfortable and easy. It doesn’t say do not condemn...unless the person really deserved it. It says “do not judge,” “do not condemn,” “forgive.” These are not suggestions. These are commandments, divine instructions. There are no asterisks leading to a list of exceptions and exemptions. There are no caveats. God isn’t asking us how we feel or for our opinion on the matter. Christ is saying follow my lead; do as I do, rise above petty cares. Often when we take the lead and allow God’s spirit to work in and through us, we find that those we were in conflict with respond differently. Their hearts and spirits open. Rancor is replaced with compassion and understanding. But even if those around us aren’t able to forgive and let go of judgment, we can rest assured that our Creator will give us the tolerance, compassion and love that we are seeking.

Is there someone whom you have been judging, condemning or withholding forgiveness from (perhaps just secretly to yourself)? Can you ask God now to take away those obstacles and replace them with love for that person?

Holly Bass, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

GOD OUR HOPE

*For You, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth.
Psalm 71.5*

This is a prayer by David for God’s help in his old age when enemies threatened. In it David states that God has been his help and hope since his youth. He calls God his Sovereign Lord and thus, David is His subject and servant.

God is our Sovereign Lord too, and we are his subjects and his servants. God is the maker of the world, us, and the universe. How can we not praise and worship such a Sovereign Lord? How complex and wonderful our bodies are, how our minds are able to communicate, learn, teach, to do all manner of things that no other beings on earth can do. How complex is the earth, the varied plants, trees, animals, birds, sea creatures and how they all work together. Look at the universe, our solar system, our Milky Way galaxy, all the other galaxies and all the other celestial objects out there that defy the mind’s comprehension. When we look at the universe we are seeing infinity, worlds without end. Yet He knows us and provided His Son Jesus to provide a way to be His followers, forever, eternal life, life with Him.

Prayer: Dear God, We thank you that you are our Creator and the Creator of everything including your Son, and yet you know us. Let us be your willing subjects and your servants as David was. May we help take care of your world and the peoples that you also created and make the world a better place having been here. Amen

Kenneth Oberly, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

JOURNAL ENTRY

TESTIMONY OF GOD'S GOODNESS

*We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.
Romans 8:28*

Despite the obvious, God loves Haiti. God has protected Haiti, nurtured Haiti and delivered Haiti. I know that God works for the good of those who Love him. I am overwhelmingly convinced of God's goodness. In silence and overwhelming disbelief, I have watched God's chosen people, despite their calamity and threat of death, raise their hands and voices in Praise and testimony to God's goodness. I watched in total disbelief as the people of Haiti prayed and praised the good Lord, singing and thanking the Lord, for what has become of them. I have also learned that the people of Haitian, while going through the tragedy, have not questioned God's goodness or blamed God for the tragedy. Despite a strong effort, by some negative forces, the Haitian peoples are steadfast in their resolve not to assign blame. The Haitian people are willing to live without all the answers. I have discovered that for one to want the peace that passes understanding, one has to give up one's right to understand. Surrender to God and God's goodness—this is what I have witnessed the Haitian people commit themselves to.

I began to realize that God is always for us. Does it mean He no longer loves us when we are in trouble or calamity, hungry or destitute, in danger or threatened with death? No, despite all these things, victory is ours if we transition through Jesus Christ. Neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow can separate us from God's love. Not even death or the shaking earth below. **Nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God.**

*Prayer: Dear Lord, the Haitian people encourage us to spend time meditating on Your goodness. You are a God of compassion. Despite what happens in our lives, You **cause all things to work together for our good as we love You and do Your will.***

Michael Mwalye, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

REFLECTION

What was the Good News that stood out for you this week?

Is there anybody that comes to mind to share this Good News with this week? If so, pray for the person and ask the Lord to give you the courage and the opportunity to share with the person.

Special Note: If at any point you desire a personal relationship with God, information is provided for you at the end of this devotional. Believers can use the same information to lead a person into a personal relationship with Christ. May God bless you on your journey.

REFLECTION

What was the Good News that stood out for you this week?

Are there any themes that developed during the week that spoke to you or your life situation? How will you respond to this insight?

Is there anybody that comes to mind to share this Good News with this week? If so, pray for the person and ask the Lord to give you the courage and the opportunity to share with the person.

Special Note: If at any point you desire a personal relationship with God, information is provided for you at the end of this devotional. Believers can use the same information to lead a person into a personal relationship with Christ. May God bless you on your journey.

OUR HEAVENLY PARENT

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Have you ever worked exceptionally hard on a project and someone else received the credit? Our ego seems to need stroking for us to continue doing good work. If we are honest, we like for someone to notice when we do something impressive. Maybe it is that inner-child, learning to ride the bike and calling to our parents: "Look at me!" Solomon passed on wisdom of the ages when he developed this collection of life helps to pass on to his children. If you pay attention to Solomon's advice it always points to God not himself. As wise as Solomon was, he knows where his gift of wisdom comes from, just as all good gifts come from God. In these verses he encourages his children and all of us to focus on God and not stroking our own ego. It makes sense if we think about it. If you are talented or even able to work hard and accomplish something outstanding, where did that gift or talent find its origination? God blesses us with talents and abilities and calls on us to use them in this world to help share in the work of the kingdom. Now, sometimes we will be recognized, but more often than not the press may not cover our greatest activities. Regardless, the parent that we seek to impress knows. God knows our very heart and desire. It is God that created us and is honored when we use our gifts and talents to bless God's world. So go out and make a difference and know that our heavenly parent is proud that the abilities we inherited are being used for the kingdom work.

Prayer: Lord, we admit it is hard not to desire to be the focus of attention or to get credit for things we accomplish but deep down we know that it is only by your Spirit working within us that we can do anything. Help us to be humble as your Son who modeled a life that was self emptying and always pointing to you. Amen.

Rev. Tommy Justus, Senior Pastor, Mars Hill Baptist Church, Mars Hill, NC
(2008-2009 Mission Team Leader to National Baptist Memorial Church)

JOURNAL ENTRY

WHY WORSHIP JESUS?

*And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."
Hebrews 1.6*

In the previous verses, it says that God made the universe through His son, Jesus Christ. After Christ provided us purification of our sins he went to sit on the Father's right hand side. He is, thus, much above all the angels. God's angels are told to worship Him as God's Son.

Christ is God's Son, not an angel. His scripture makes it clear that not only is Christ His Son but God made the universe through His Son, Jesus. For Him to be able to do that way back at the beginning means that He is part of God. He is a creator like God. If the angels are told to worship Jesus, God's Son, we should worship Him too. We would worship Him since He, as the Creator, made us as He made the universe from His seat at the right hand of the Father. Jesus is not only the Jews' Messiah, He is our Messiah, our Savior, our Way to be His follower and His helper in the world while we are here.

*Prayer: Dear Jesus, We worship You, our Savior, the Son of God, Maker of the universe through the power of Your Father God. We worship You as God instructed the angels to worship You. He made us to be with Him and in His image, maybe a spirit image, since God is Spirit. Didn't' He say He made man a little lower than the angels? We have the ability to choose and we choose to worship You. Thank You Jesus, our Lord and God.
Amen.*

Kenneth Oberly, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

IN ALL THINGS REMEMBER HIM

*...and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.
Ephesians 4:32*

It's very easy, with all that goes on in the world these days, to forget about God. So much of our lives are consumed by work, school, relationships, money etc. In some cases people are even too consumed by church to remember the true purpose for being there. I know you may be wondering how that concept relates to a scripture about kindness and forgiveness, but it's really pretty simple. When we get too caught up in the world we also embrace an, "eye for an eye," mentality of the world and that is not God's way. God gave us eyes, ears, brains, and everything else that we so boldly call ours without expecting anything in return. We disobey and disrespect Him constantly, and He forgives us time and time again even when we don't seek forgiveness. God is great; truly great. While we will never even come close to being as great as He is, be reminded that He created us in his image. That means that even in a world that deceptively promotes all the wrong things, we can still be all that God intended us to be because everything that He is, we are also.

*Prayer: It is only because of Your grace that I even have the mind to say I love You Lord.
Today help me to remember You.*

Micah Robinson, Music Ministry Assistant, National Baptist Memorial Church

BUT AS FOR ME, IT IS GOOD TO BE NEAR GOD

*But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, to tell of all your works.
Psalm 73.28*

As people created by God, there are certain things that all human beings share; we have all been created in the image of God, we have all fallen from that image, and God has acted to save all of us from sin in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There are, however, differences in how we each respond. We each make choices in our lives. A critical choice is whether or not we choose a loving relationship with God. God pursues that relationship; it is up to us to respond. That response is both a life-changing decision, and a daily commitment. Every day we need to acknowledge that “it is good to be near God.” That acknowledgment needs to be made to God, and it needs to be made to those around us. God longs for a people who will worship sincerely and witness boldly. In a world where many people see mostly conflict, frustration, and meaninglessness, we need to constantly “tell of all your deeds” to help open people’s eyes to the facts that God has acted and is acting, and that God’s acts offer real hope, real, faith and real love. We want to invite all persons to join us in saying that “it is good to be near God.”

Prayer: We want to be near You, God. Our actions cannot accomplish that; only Your mighty, effective, sacrificial love through Jesus Christ has bridged the gap. Open our mouths to glorify You in worship, and to serve You by telling others of everything You have done and everything You are doing in our lives and in the world You long to bring closer to You. Amen.

Richard Walker, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

JESUS OUR STANDARD, PT. 1

*...make my joy complete, be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.
Philippians 2:2*

Paul’s letter to the Philippians is my favorite among all the letters attributed to him. I get a strong sense of the intimate connection Paul had with the church in Philippi and how proud he was of this body of believers and their united dedication to believing in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi sometime during the 50s to 60s CE when the Roman Empire had past its peak. The tension between occupier and occupied peoples was volatile. Paul was most likely incarcerated when he wrote to the Philippians, and as such knew that his dear friends would need a bit more encouragement.

Abraham Lincoln made famous a saying that has its roots in the Gospels and the Pauline letters: a house divided against itself cannot stand. But Paul chooses to emphasize the positive: a united house will never fall and its foundations will not be shaken. He admonishes his readers to be of one accord with one another, implying that yes, there will be differences of opinion, but above all remain united in the commitment to Christ and showing to others the love they have experienced in Jesus. Paul urges the Philippians to aspire to the character of Christ: humility, concern for the poor, loving compassion, and most importantly, obedience to the will of God. For the reward is greater than can be imagined. Paul’s hymn of praise on the nature of Jesus gave the Philippian church the fortitude to keep going, to persevere in working out their salvation. In 2010, we are similarly charged to find out what it means to follow Jesus.

Prayer: Mighty God, help me to be on one accord with my brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank You for Jesus who set a standard for me to strive for in my own life. Help me to follow Jesus.

Mary Little, 2009 Summer Intern at National Baptist Memorial Church

JESUS OUR STANDARD, PT. 2

*...for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for [God's] good pleasure.
Philippians 2:13*

Paul calls his readers (which includes you) “beloved”, and directs them to “*work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling*” (2:12). In the Greek, “to work out” is an imperative command, a directive, almost like a military order from a commander to troops. It is not a one-time task that can be checked off the list and set aside in the “done” pile. Rather, Paul insists that his beloved readers, all of us, continue working, studying, and applying our faith to our actions. Working out our salvation is a never-ending process because God is in us, completing the Divine Will that is unique for each of us. The greatest gift humans possess is our ability to reason and to make choices. And God gives us that gift to assist in the greater task of living each day to the fullest on our journey toward salvation. Paul says that God is *enabling you both to will and to work for [God's] good pleasure*. We get to participate! God wants us to be in a relationship with us! By believing in Jesus and following His teachings, we are participants in the revelation of the Will of God not only for ourselves but also for the world in which we live! With God in us, there is nothing we can't do, and nothing that can separate that love of the God-With-Us (Emmanuel) from you, from me, from this body of believers called the Church.

Passion Week is coming...A spiritual darkness will descend once more upon us as Jesus endures the torturous agony and suffering on the cross. Yet we know that there is hope in a life everlasting that awaits us with the dawn of Easter morning, proving that God is still at work in this world for good, not evil.

Prayer: Lord, help us to take on the character of Christ as our cross and follow Him. Help us to remember that wherever we go, You go with us and before us along the way to salvation. Amen.

Mary Little, 2009 Summer Intern at National Baptist Memorial Church

GIVE THANKS

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.
Psalm 100:4-5*

Every second of our life, God is continuously blessing us. Sometimes we may view some of our blessings as more easily recognizable than others, such as getting a new job, receiving unexpected money, or being able to mend a broken relationship with someone we love. Sometimes we may take our blessings for granted such as being able to breathe (because there are some people in this world who just took their last breath) or even being able to read this devotional (because there are many people in this world who cannot read). Many times we are being blessed and may not even know it. In short, we are always being blessed, thus we continuously have reasons to praise God and give Him thanks for all that He is doing in our lives. When we enter into His sanctuary we should remember this, and worship Him accordingly, which means to worship Him *continuously*. If, for whatever reason, we can't think of something to thank and praise God for, we should always remember that the Lord is good and we can praise and thank Him simply for that. He loves us no matter what, and we can thank Him for loving us just the way we are.

Are you continuously giving the Lord thanks and praise?

Deena Nakpodia, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

CHOOSE FREEDOM

*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.
II Corinthians 3:17*

In II Corinthians 3:18 Paul says, “All of us, seeing the glory of the Lord....are being transformed.” The question for Christians is “what does that transformation mean?” I remember my “come to Jesus” moment. I became a Christian because life had become more than I could handle and I thought that my belief in Christ would miraculously make my problems disappear. After many years and tears, I have learned that the glory of the Christ is not that our lives become devoid from pain. On the contrary, the Bible teaches us that living into our walk with God means that life may become harder. Regardless of our socio-economic status; our race or ethnicity; our gender; our age; or a myriad of things that might describe us as individuals, or as a community, life is and will always be complicated.

Look at Paul. He was a man of privilege until he encountered the Spirit of the Lord. Paul went from being a persecutor to being persecuted. In his “come to Jesus” moment, Paul found that he had a whole new set of responsibilities, and even burdens, but still he chooses in II Corinthians 3:17 to speak of freedom. Too often we make our spiritual journey about limitations and judgments. We conceptualize our faith as a litany of people, places, and things from which we must abstain. While I believe that God calls us to live differently, I also believe that if we are to truly live out the Gospel, we must move away from our litigious understanding of our faith and focus on its liberating power. The challenge for us as believers is to understand our transformation as giving us the power, not to transcend life, but to walk through it.

*As Christians we have the opportunity to make a choice everyday about whether to get
bogged down or be liberated by our faith.
Which will you choose today?*

Min. Yolanda M. Norton, 2010 Seminary Intern at National Baptist
Memorial Church

FILLED WITH JOY

*I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.
John 15:11*

These are difficult times that we are living in with the devastation across the waters in Haiti and the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. President Obama reiterated in his State of the Union Address how unemployment and home foreclosures are affecting many families across the country including my own. As I reflect on the verse John 15:11, I am reminded to always be joyful in the Lord and to praise God in good and bad times. It is easy to be joyful and praise God when times are good but many times we turn our backs and become angry when we are suffering. We do not pray or study scripture and thus become sad and depressed. Our relationship with Jesus is vital to our stability, especially when life is tough. How do we keep our stability? Through Prayer. Jesus prayed constantly to God for guidance. We know that there is power in prayer. Our faith is tested each day and we must therefore stay connected to Jesus each day – through prayer. As we pray, we should leave our concerns, pain and sorrow with God. God is always with us and does not need our help to handle our problems. We must trust God and remain faithful to God. Joy is at our fingertips. Read your Bible, pray to God and be faithful. Joy is knowing God.

I pray each day for peace, joy and guidance in my life. I pray for my family, friends and co-workers. I know that God is with me.

*Do you know that God is with you? Pray and trust God and your life will be filled
with joy.*

Julie C. Lewis, volunteer National Baptist Memorial Church's
Teen Mother's Program

WAITING IN SILENCE

*For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.
Psalm 62:5*

In 1995, I had the privilege of meeting Mother Teresa in Calcutta. It was an unforgettable experience that was life changing. I had traveled to India to be with my son, Joel, who had begun a mission organization. She gave us about 20 minutes of her time, and in the course of the conversation she said, “I want to give you my business card.” It reads as follows:

The fruit of silence is prayer
The fruit of prayer is faith
The fruit of faith is love
The fruit of love is service
The fruit of service is peace

About the same time I read an article by Henri Nouwen, “Moving from Solitude to Community to Ministry.” That article, combined with the experience in India, began to shape my practice of prayer. I became convinced that I need to spend more time in silence in the presence of God, talking less and listening more. I needed to do what the Psalmist did: “Wait in silence.”

Now I confess that this continues to be difficult for me because I am an activist and an extrovert. And, if I am honest with myself, I like to think that I can “make things happen” when in reality, I am absolutely dependent on God for everything. Silence and solitude creates a space to relinquish my self—dependence and nurture a God—dependence, because “my hope is in Him.”

Will you commit to spending at least 10 minutes in silence a day?

Daniel Vestal, Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

JOURNAL ENTRY

REFLECTION

Take time and write a prayer for someone today. Ask the Lord to give you the words to write. If your first choice is a family member or friend, write a second prayer for someone you don't know (i.e. someone you remember on public transportation, a cashier at the coffee shop or grocery store.)

REFLECTION

What have you learned new this week about God? How do you feel about what you learned?

Write a prayer or letter of praise to God.

JOURNAL ENTRY

CHOOSE LIFE

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

John 10:10

To capture the essence of what Jesus was saying in the above quotation, one has to read the whole chapter to understand the context under which it was uttered. It should be noted that Jesus has already introduced himself as the Son of God, picked his disciples, performed several miracles and preached the gospel about good and evil, and what God approves and disapproves. He wanted all to know why He came into the world.

A good teacher always uses illustrations and imagery to get his or her points across. Jesus is particularly ardent in using imagery and parables for his audience to ponder. It is possible that someone reading this may not have lost anything to a thief. However, you must have heard of thieves robbing a bank, where occasionally lives are lost and property destroyed. We must have heard of thieves breaking into homes and stealing valuables such as jewelry, flat screen TVs, laptops and money. Christ condemned these acts. Also, there is “spiritual thief,” Satan—he comes to steal our joy, kill our hopes and dreams, and destroy our relationship with God.

Jesus said that he came so that we may have life abundantly. First, without life, there is nothing. So God, who gives life, gives EVERYTHING. But, He did not stop there. He gives it “abundantly.” That means you will be amply supplied and you will lack nothing. God gives the peace that surpasses everything, joy unspeakable and life eternal.

Do you want life? Do you want it abundantly?

Won't you make your choice now?

Fidelis Nakpodia, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

L-O-V-E

*And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.
1 Corinthians 13:13*

Nothing else matters, without love. It is foundational for every other good thing in our lives.

Love is the greatest. Love is the best. Love is the most powerful. Love is the secret ingredient. Love is greater than faith because faith depends upon love. Love is greater than hope because love keeps hope alive. Love keeps life alive. Love banishes all darkness. Love is the motive force in the universe. Love is your key to the Kingdom of God and is the Door through which you must pass to enter the Kingdom of God.

Spread love. Show love. Display love. Share love. And surrender to Love because Love surrendered Himself to be crucified on the Cross for you.

The Lenten season is a time to focus on hope, faith, love, and the sacrifice Jesus made for us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You for your many blessings. Help us to always focus our lives on faith, hope, and love for You.

Min. Allyson D. Brown, Mount Zion Baptist Church, Arlington, VA

FORGIVENESS POWER

*...but I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven;
Matthew 5:44-45a*

To love my enemies and pray for the people who do bad things to me required that I transcend the baggage of hate and the need to revenge. Getting rid of this baggage required that I trust in the Lord. It's never easy. It's never easy because of human fears about the unknown. Fear about today, worries about tomorrow and the need to have all the answers. I have stumbled and struggled along the ride. There are times when I have wanted to get off mid-station only to be encouraged to hold on—for the driver is none other than Christ. Having total trust in the driver, Jesus Christ, has not only denied me the option of having hatred in my heart towards those who wrong me, but freed me of the hatred. I can personally attest to the fact that living without hate is possible. Here is my story:

Years ago, when I was very young, my father was killed. We grew up hearing stories as to who plotted and killed my father. As the stories go, it was my father's siblings. After my father's death, they tried to adopt us. My mother put up a spirited fight and won. Growing up, my mother taught me the goodness of "loving your enemies and praying for those who mistreated you." (Mathew 5:43) It was my mother who taught us about forgiveness and believing in God. It's through God that we have built no hatred towards my relatives. We have grown to respect and to love. To some of them this love has been unbearable. Whenever possible they have avoided contact with us. It's because they have not rid themselves of the shame and guilt. Whenever possible, we have prayed for them. We respect them as our relatives. We are kind to them and their children. We are able to overcome hatred towards them because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Christ, God has eliminated the hatred from our hearts.

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, grant me the power to forgive. Thank you for hearing my prayer.
Amen.*

Betty Naiga, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

IN GOD'S HANDS

...For the wicked shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

Psalm 37:9

This verse really helps me understand that sometimes patience and trust are really the only things we can truly have in times of need or anytime in our lives. Listening and knowing that God will hear and answer your prayers is one of the greatest gifts we have been given. All we have to do is trust that He will hear us. His hands are far greater than ours.

The Lord deepens our understanding of patience and trust. When we seek God, the Holy Spirit lifts us up above all things in our lives. His power helps us to exhale all the stresses and anxieties we try to hold close in our own hands. He helps us not to be afraid to inherit the Lord's blessings. We should not try to reason whether or not we think we deserve God's blessings, because we don't. In fact, we haven't done enough to even be heard, much less loved COMPLETELY by the Lord, but God still love us!

Prayer: Thank you Lord for who you are and who you continue to be in our lives, in Jesus' most Holy and precious name I pray, Amen.

Daniel Goforth, 2009 Summer Intern at National Baptist Memorial Church

VICTORY IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE

...for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith.

1 John 5:4

As we think about the battles that are raging in Iraq and Afghanistan, we are reminded that we are also fighting a battle. Our battle, however, is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12) We are in a constant battle to do what is good, to escape the grip of sinful habits and desires. The good news is that victory is not impossible for believers in Christ because we have been born again and the Holy Spirit, which dwells within us, gives us the strength to overcome the world. To be victorious in our battles, we need the power of Christ active in our lives. It is not easy to escape the lure and temptations that the world presents, but with faith in Christ, we can be victorious. This victory requires our obedience to God. This obedience gives us the strength that we need to demolish Satan's strongholds. So each day, put on the full spiritual armor of God which will shield you from anything that Satan sends your way. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

Prayer: Almighty God, I thank you for your constant love and for being our refuge, our fortress, and our shield. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Rev. Gloria J. Grant is Associate Pastor at University Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)