



ASK FOR WISDOM

JAMES 1:5

- ANGER
- HOME
- CHILDREN
- PARENTS
- ABANDONMENT
- JOB
- HEALING
- FAMILY
- FINANCES
- TRUST
- PEACE
- LEADERSHIP
- HEALTH
- FAITHFULNESS
- LOVE
- FORGIVENESS
- RELATIONSHIP
- EMPLOYMENT
- HOPE
- PURPOSE
- JOY

2012 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL



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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

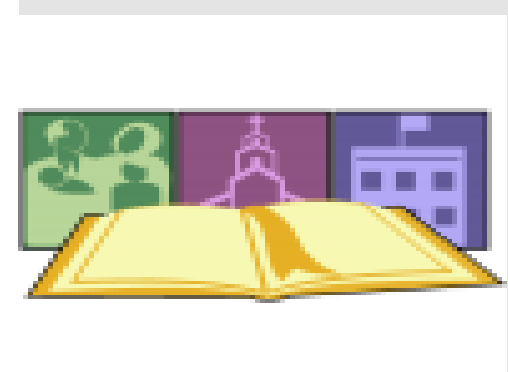
“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23). As believers we admit that we are sinners, which means we have disobeyed God.

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).

JOURNAL ENTRY

During the Season of Lent, Sundays are to Celebrate the Resurrection, Jesus' victory over sin and death. Today, take time to reflect and write about your victories. The victories can include actual events, situations, behaviors, thought patterns or even attitudes.



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.

SURVIVING THE STORM CONTINUED...

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY (ICE) is a program that enables first responders, such as [paramedics](#), [firefighters](#), and [police officers](#), to identify victims and contact their [next of kin](#) to obtain important medical information. The program was conceived in the mid-2000s and promoted by [British](#) paramedic Bob Brotchie in May 2005. It encourages people to enter emergency contacts in their [mobile phone address book](#) under the name "ICE". Alternately, a person can list multiple emergency contacts as "ICE1", "ICE2", etc. (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In_case_of_emergency)



IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, the Children of God need to call on God! Please find below the Lord's contact information and program it into your memory.

GOD IS:

- ICE1: The God Who Sees Me (Genesis 16:13)
- ICE2: A Stronghold In Times Of Trouble (Psalm 9:9)
- ICE3: He Who Blots Out Your Transgressions (Isaiah 43:25)
- ICE4: Father To The Fatherless (Psalm 68:5)
- ICE5: My Helper (Psalm 118:7; Hebrew 2:11)
- ICE6: He Who Comforts You (Isaiah 66:13)
- ICE7: The One Who Sustains Me (Psalm 54:4)
- ICE8: A Forgiving God (Nehemiah. 9:17)
- ICE9: God our Strength (Psalm 18:2)
- ICE10: God Most High (Genesis 14:18-22)
- ICE11: My Hiding Place (Psalm 32:7)
- ICE12: My Hope (Psalm 25:5, 12)
- ICE13: A Faithful God (Deuteronomy 32:4)
- ICE14: A Refuge For The Poor (Isaiah 25:4)

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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 22-April 8, 2012. 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 for 2012 is "Ask for Wisdom." We live in uncertain times, employment, government, weather and much more are not reliable. As children of God, we have the ability to have peace and overcome trials if we seek and rely on God. The Church desires that this publication be a powerful tool to inspire a deeper walk with God. 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 International Version of the 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.

As you read this devotional may the Holy Spirit speak to you. May you learn more about how to be led by the Spirit of God in every aspect of your life. May your faith grow stronger. May God's peace keep you during trials and God's wisdom see you through.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the contributors to National Baptist Memorial Church's 2012 Lenten Devotional. Special thanks to Kimberly Freeman Brown, Richard Walker and Rev. Audrey Wiggins, who helped edit this publication.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR

*The LORD appeared to Solomon at Gibeon. He spoke to him in a dream during the night. God said "Ask for anything you want me to give you."
1 King 3:6-15*

We often use the saying "be careful what you ask for" as a warning. Old tales about fairies offering wishes to people usually end with the lesson: Be satisfied with what you already have.

God desires full life for God's children. God pays attention, like a good parent does, to what God's children ask for. Even as children of God, we are to be careful of what we ask. Here, being careful means taking a moment to determine what we really need. Is it financial wealth, is it physical health, or...is it spiritual discernment, or wisdom?

In God's conversation with Solomon, Solomon asked for spiritual discernment to help him govern Israel; and God was pleased and gave him that as well as the material blessings. This doesn't mean that we have learned a trick; ask for spiritual things and get a Jaguar! It does mean that as we ask for what we really need, "God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" Phil. 4:19.

PRAYER: Lord, teach me to ask wisely and act wisely, for Your sake and for all of Your children. Amen.

Rick Walker is a member of National Baptist Memorial Church

IN GOD WE BEGIN AND IN GOD WE END

Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance.

Proverbs 29:3

(King James Version of the Bible used here)

SPENDETH here denotes: paying out money, and spending time in a wasteful, useless, profitless, thoughtless, careless, valueless, inappropriate, inefficient, unproductive way.

SUBSTANCE is our very core, our center, our essence, our heart and soul, who we are and what we are about.

If, in God we begin and in God we end our day, we can be saved from lost, we can be made useful, have an advantage, and receive great gain..

Prayer: Lord help me to begin and end each day in conversation and fellowship with you, in order that I may make good use of every minute and every dollar that comes to me, each and every day.

Vivinee' Garner-Jones, "Reverend Mother"

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.*

SURVIVING THE STORMS

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

Over the last few years, I have become increasingly amazed by the storms that have shut down airports, train stations, bus stations, highways, businesses and even cities. The increasing numbers of natural disasters have challenged people's sense of safety and wellbeing. Much like the storms that are a result of nature, the storms that emerge from life circumstances can leave people feeling the same way.

Health challenges, heartbreak, death, financial challenges, job loss and conflict seem to be on the rise creating storms in the lives of people. There are some who are facing a combination of the above which makes one feel like they are hit by a hurricane or blizzard daily. This is when the winds of life are unusually strong and challenging, which in turn undermines a person's sense of safety and wellbeing.

It seems to me the best way to overcome the storms we face is preparation. As people of faith, we must first understand that as people who believe in Jesus Christ, we are going to face challenges. We cannot afford to be in denial of that fact. We will face trials and tribulations.

However, as Christians we do not face trials and tribulations alone. When we accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we obtained an insurance policy without loop holes. Unlike home owners insurance that at times will not pay off when natural disasters hit, God promises in Romans 8:28 that, "...all things work together for good—for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."

In the pages of this devotional, "wisdom" is explored. Insight is shared to help people weather the storms of life.

PRAYER: Father, teach me and show me how to live as a wise person. Help me to not only survive the storms of life, but to thrive regardless of life circumstances.

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

LISTEN FOR GOD'S VOICE

*A wise man's heart guides his mouth,
and his lips promote instruction.*

*Pleasant words are a honeycomb,
sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.*

Proverbs 16:23-24

I enjoy technology and social networks yet, used improperly, they result in awkward situations. Sometimes the insertion of an ear bud creates an illusion of privacy causing people to forget that others can hear their phone conversations. While dining out, riding public transportation or waiting in any line we overhear the business deals, travel plans, petty spats, and private concerns of strangers. With the ubiquitous smart phone people text, tweet, and post on facebook with startling speed and regularity.

Proverbs 16:23, 24 remind us that wisdom, an attribute of the nature of God which we begin to attain through our reverence of God, is reflected in communication that is uplifting and attractive to others. This implies that we need to invite God to direct all of our communication; spoken, texted, tweeted, or blogged. Unless we slow down and listen for God's voice *before* we communicate, we are likely to be inappropriate and potentially hurtful in our sharing.

PRAYER: Loving God, we invite you to check every communication taking root in our mind. Temper our zeal for speed and quantity with quality and holiness. Before any communication comes forth, awaken us to our surroundings and the potential impact of our words.

Rev. Marilyn P. Turner, Associate Executive Director, Center for Missional Life and Leadership; Associate National Secretary, American Baptist Churches in the USA

WHEN SMART PEOPLE NEED TO LEARN FROM GOD

But God made the earth by His power; He founded the world by His wisdom and stretched out the heavens by His understanding.

Jeremiah 10:12

The Earth in which we live in was brought into existence by God's wisdom. Wisdom is defined as "knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action" (dictionary.com). We all aspire to be knowledgeable and well versed in all areas of our lives. Regardless of how much knowledge we may think we have gained, there are times where we find ourselves in situations in which we may not know what to do or where to turn. We must understand that next to God we know nothing. We need to stop relying on ourselves and what we think we know, and put our lives into the hands of the One who knows everything. God has all wisdom. So why not turn to God when we are in tough situations? Furthermore, why not turn to God for all things? He is all knowing.

PRAYER: Giver of Divine Wisdom, teach us to be humble about how much we know, and to be eager to learn from You.

Deena Nakpodia, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

ASK FOR WISDOM

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

James 1:1-5

James, the brother of Jesus, tells scattered and persecuted followers of Jesus, "Consider it pure joy, whenever you face trials..." What a strange and peculiar concept James is proposing.

However, James, an elder statesman in the church, new that joy was possible when faced with trials. He was sharing with his brothers and sisters in Christ that trials produce spiritual benefits. When we do not know how to overcome; get out of...; stand firm; or stand strong, we have access to the wisdom of God. If we ask God for wisdom, God gives it generously, without finding fault.

During the 40 day journey of Lent be intentional about asking God for wisdom in the every aspect of life.

PRAYER: Lord, let joy be established in my life when faced with trials. Give me the words to say and what to do. Let Your strength be made perfect in our weaknesses.

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

Special Note: If at any point you desire a personal relationship with God or want to recommit yourself to God, information is provided for you at the end of this devotional.

LIVE JOYFULLY!

*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*

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, who grants wisdom to see us through.

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 joyful 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.

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

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

JOURNAL ENTRY

REFLECTION

PERSONAL CONFESSIONS

Additional personal confessions are provided below. Write down what they mean to you. You can do the same thing for the confessions that were provided yesterday.

- ◆ I let the Word dwell in me richly. He Who began a good work in me will continue until the day of Christ. (Col. 3:16, Phil. 1:6.)

- ◆ I have the mind of Christ and hold the thoughts, feelings, and purposes of His heart. (1 Cor. 2:16)

- ◆ I am a believer and not a doubter. I hold fast to my confession of faith. I decided to walk by faith and practice faith. My faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Jesus is the author and the developer of my faith. (Heb. 4:14, Heb. 11:6, Rom. 10:17, Heb. 12:2.)

(Personal Confessions from Copeland, Germaine. Prayers That Avail Much: Commemorative Gift Edition.)

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

SURVIVING THE STORM CONTINUED...

Creating a Disaster Supply Kit

There are certain items you need to have regardless of where you ride out a storm. The “Disaster Supply Kit” is a useful tool when you evacuate and when you are trapped in your home. When riding out a natural storm, it is suggested that supply kits be filled with things like water, food, first aid kits, medicines, flash lights, clothes, blankets and array of other things.

The “Disaster Supply Kit” for believers needs to be equipped with a vast supply of “personal confessions.” They are used to help the believer whether the storms of life and work best when stored in the heart.

PERSONAL CONFESSIONS

- ◆ Jesus has been made unto me wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me. (1Cor. 1:30, Phil. 4:13)
- ◆ The Lord is my shepherd. I do not want. My God supplies all my need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Ps. 23, Phil. 4:19.)
- ◆ I am the Body of Christ. I am redeemed from the curse, because Jesus bore my sicknesses and carried my diseases in His own body. By His stripes I am healed. I forbid any sickness or disease to operate in my body. Every organ, every tissue of my body functions in the perfection in which God created it to function. I honor God and bring glory to Him in my body. (Gal. 3:13, Matt. 8:17, 1 Pet. 2:24, 1 Cor. 6:20.)
- ◆ I tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy. I take my shield of faith and quench his every fiery dart. Greater is he Who is in me than he who is in the world. (Ps. 91:13, Eph. 6:16, 1 John 4:4.)
- ◆ I fear not for God has given me a spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind. God is on my side. (2 Tim. 1:7, Rom. 8:31.)

(Personal Confessions from Copeland, Germaine. Prayers That Avail Much: Commemorative Gift Edition.)

DIVINE RESOURCES

*For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,
for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.
Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path.
For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.
Proverbs 2:6-11*

From the time you wake in the morning until you close our eyes at night, you make a myriad of choices. Some are automatic – brush your teeth and wash your face; others are gut-wrenching – do you pay the rent or buy food for the family. Still others confuse your thinking, test your patience, challenge your integrity.

Fortunately, you have divine resources that can guide you in your daily living. Proverbs 2:6-7 proclaims that God grants us wisdom and gives us knowledge and understanding...and even common sense. When you keep your focus on God instead of fretting about problems, you allow God to help you make the right decisions in every aspect of your life. Godly wisdom will lead you to better relationships in your home, church and workplace. It will keep you from taking the wrong path. It will cause you to speak love instead of spewing hate. It will give you hope in seemingly hopeless situations.

PRAAYER: Dear God, Grant me Your wisdom today. Let it enter my heart and allow Your knowledge and understanding to be my constant companions. Give me the common sense to trust You for everything and in every situation. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.

Yvonne Lamb, District of Columbia Baptist Convention, past President

PRIDE LEADS TO DISGRACE, WISDOM TO GOD'S GLORY

*When pride comes, then comes disgrace; but with humility comes wisdom.
Proverbs 11:2*

The story of King Nebuchadnezzar found in Daniel 4:28-37 brings insight to this verse. Nebuchadnezzar was a successful and powerful king who became a little too proud of "his accomplishments." Listen to the statement that King Nebuchadnezzar made before he was disgraced, "Is this not magnificent Babylon, which I have built as a royal capital by my mighty power and for my glorious majesty?" Before he could finish this statement the king lost everything including his mind. For seven years, he lived like an animal, ate grass like an animal and eventually looked like an animal. It was not until he acknowledged God as the Most High God, the only true King that he regained everything that he had lost. God blessed him with even more than he had before. All power and authority belong to GOD. All praise, credit, honor and glory belong to God.

PRAAYER: Father, help me to give you thanks and glory each and every day. You are the one who gives me life. You supply all my needs and blessings. Thank You, Amen!

Min. Linda Nakpodia, member, Member National Baptist Memorial Church

HUMILITY AND PRIDE

Proverbs is direct and forceful in rejecting pride. The proud attitude heads the list of seven things God hates (Proverbs 6:16-17). The harmful results of pride are constantly contrasted with humility and its benefits.

RESULTS:

HUMILITY

PRIDE

Leads to wisdom.....	Leads to disgrace.....	Proverbs 11:2
Takes advice.....	Produces quarrels.....	Proverbs 13:10
Leads to honor.....		Proverbs 15:33
	Leads to punishment.....	Proverbs 16:5
	Leads to destruction.....	Proverbs 16:18
Ends in honor.....	Ends in downfall.....	Proverbs 18:12
Brings honor.....	Brings one low.....	Proverbs 29:23

PRAYER: Lord, forgive me for the times that I have been prideful. Grant me your wisdom to be humble. Give me the openness to take advice so I may live a life that honors You, Lord. Amen!

NEVER SELL IT

Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline, and understanding.
Proverbs 23:23

The theme of this devotional is, "Ask for Wisdom." I think the message of the scripture can be summed up in just three words--"never sell it." To sell anything, in its most basic principle, is simply to exchange one thing of lesser value for another thing of higher value. It's a concept that makes a lot of sense and is pretty easy to live by for most of us. The difficulty comes when we start to lose the value of the truth we've been given and would rather exchange it for something that looks more valuable, but isn't. It's like when you pray about something and God tells you it's not for you but you keep trying because you have exchanged His truth for the seemingly more inspiring lie that if you try harder, your hard work will be rewarded.

We have to stop judging God's truth by our impression of what the outcome should be. If God says leave and leaving starts hurting then we naturally want to go back. Instead, we have to continue to trust God and hold on to His truth. No matter how much better or more valuable the other way might look, simply put we must believe God and know that the outcome of his will is better than anything we could create for ourselves.

PRAYER: "I'm prone to wander, Lord. I feel it. I'm prone to leave even the God I love. So here's my heart Lord, take and seal it. Seal it for thy courts above."
(words from Robert Robinson's song, "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing.")

Micah Robinson, Music Director, National Baptist Memorial Church

WHEN IN DOUBT...

Wisdom has built her house; She has hewn out her seven pillars.
Proverbs 9:1

Jimmy Kimmel tells the story of a family vacation when he was a young child and their old car in which they were traveling broke down. As a result, they were forced to eat at a restaurant that appeared battered and bedraggled. As the waitress gave them their menus, the food projected the same ambience. It was at this point Mr. Kimmel declares his father shared with him a pearl of wisdom, “When in doubt order the hamburger.”

Many times in life we will face uncertainty. Yet during these rifts in the restaurants of life the menu is filled with options, let us remain with what we know is true. God’s Word has built a house that stands in our life today, and it is stable because hewn out of the Word are the pillars of our testimony. A house with seven pillars denotes perfection, completeness, and rest. What are the pillars that have built your house?

PRAYER: Lord, when I am faced with uncertainty help me to rely on You. Let Your Word shape me.

Rev. Dr. Howard Willis, Jr., Senior Pastor, Greater Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church,
Washington, DC, 2010 Revival preacher at National Baptist Church

HOW CAN IT BE FOUND?

*But where can wisdom be found?
Where does understanding dwell?
No mortal comprehends its worth;
it cannot be found in the land of the living.
Job 28: 12-13*

Everyday the world tells us that being dependent is a weakness. Politicians tell us to “pick yourself up by your bootstraps;” the media tells us, “trust no one;” our bosses tell us, “figure things out on our own;” and, we tell ourselves that we have all the answers to life’s conundrums. We strive our whole lives to be independent, self-reliant individuals. While there is merit in challenging ourselves and pursuing personal goals, this can oftentimes get us into trouble and prevent us from drawing closer to God.

This passage reminds us that we cannot find wisdom in ourselves or worldly things. Only through Yahweh will we come close to understanding -and even this can be extremely difficult. It isn’t easy to put our faith in something we can’t see or feel. With the busyness and chaos of day-to-day life, it is comfortable to rely on ourselves (or our things) to reveal to us some kind of understanding. But we need to remember that God is our creator, sustainer, and deliverer. In order to live the life Christ exemplified for us, we must depend on God’s mercy to show us wisdom.

PRAYER: “God of wisdom and understanding, thank You for allowing us to call on You for strength and guidance. Thank You for sending Your son to set for us an example to follow on this Earth. At times, we find it difficult to call on You for wisdom. We try to hold our destinies in our hands when we should give it back to You. Please help us to search for Your wisdom and understanding through Christ, in accordance with Your will. Amen.”

Lauren Hovis, 2010 Summer Intern at National Baptist Memorial Church

TWO KINDS OF WISDOM

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

James 3:13-18

The above scripture identifies two types of wisdom--Godly and earthly. As much as we can try to live solely by our own wisdom, the truth is that we need Godly and spiritual wisdom because our wisdom is insufficient by itself. The above text emphasizes the destructive nature of earthly wisdom, but I would go further to suggest that earthly wisdom is that which does not leave room for God or for God's will. This means that we are acting from earthly wisdom when we convince ourselves that we can do anything without God. As a teacher, I have occasionally found myself struggling to put together a lesson plan for class--even going to bed uncertain about what or how I would teach the next day. However, when I rest in God and surrender to the Lord, God always gives me the right words to speak and shows me how to construct my lessons. I believe that the greatest expression of wisdom is to trust and rest in God.

PRAYER OF SURRENDER: This prayer was written by St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess You have given me: I surrender it all to You to be disposed of according to Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace; with these I will be rich enough, and will desire nothing more.

Otis Ramsey Zöe, Office Manager 2010-2011, National Baptist Memorial Church

SURVIVING THE STORM CONTINUED...

History teaches that a lack of awareness and preparation are common threads among all major storms. The goal today is to inform you about life's storm hazards and provide godly wisdom to help prepare you.

Disaster Prevention Plan

Essential to disaster prevention is planning. Making life changes to strengthen you against storms will help lessen the negative impact in your life. See helpful hints below:

- ✓ Locate a “safe room” in your home where you can seek God regularly. In certain circumstances the best area may not be your home but within your community. The most important aspect of the “safe room” is that you can spend time focused on God in prayer and Bible study with limited interruption. Sample places are bathrooms, balconies, kitchen tables, court yards, coffee shops or parks.
- ✓ Identify at least 3 or 4 friends or family members as prayer partners. The benefit of prayer partners is much like placing plywood over vulnerable places in a house when a storm is coming. The plywood limits the damage or prevents damage. However, the protective covering works best when it is there before the storm starts. Prayer partners like plywood serve as a protective covering and work best when the practice is in place before the storm comes.

- ◆ The people you choose should be able to keep your information confidential.
- ◆ Prayer partners should commit to pray with and for each other consistently.
- ◆ Partners should choose a day and time that they will pray together by phone or meet in person for prayer.
- ◆ Set a short term goal of praying together for 1 month or 6 weeks. It can be extended if the group desires.
- ◆ Note: Be open to change partners if you need to. Prayer partners may last for season in your life or a life time. Just be open to the leading of the Spirit of God.

Rev. Kasey Jones, Senior Pastor, National Baptist Church

JOURNAL ENTRY

THE BENEFITS OF WISDOM

*Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.
Proverbs 13:10*

Debates, conflicts and arguments are a result of pride. God has given us certain gifts and abilities. However, if you do not understand that these gifts are from God, then you will insist that others recognize you for your abilities. When you insist that others recognize you for what God has done through you, there is an imbalance in your life that will lead to conflict.

A wise person understands that it does not matter how good he or she is--anyone can still get advice from others. As a Christian, we need to understand that God did not put us on this earth to solve all the problems of the world. It does not matter what gifts God has given to you. The Lord can always use others to help you grow.

Everyone has blind spots. As you become aware of your blind spots you become more conscious of your sinful nature and your need for God. Your blind spots will allow you to understand your need for others and how God can use others in your life to accomplish even more for God.

PRAYER: Lord, forgive me of prideful thoughts and actions. Help me to be more open to receive advice.

Min. Charmaine Young, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

REFLECTION

Are there themes that stand out to you from the week. What have you learned and how will you apply it to your life?

From the readings this week, what concepts are you struggling with and why?
After making your list ask the Lord to give you clarity and understanding.

REFLECTION

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

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.

GETTING IT

*Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them.
Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.
Wisdom is supreme: therefore get wisdom.
Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
Proverbs 4:5-7*

The greatest advice I ever received in life came from my grandfather. He taught me this: “Get all the wisdom, knowledge, and education you can get in life. They are the most important things you can get, and they are some of the few things in life that no one can ever take away from you. You will know that you have obtained true wisdom when you know the difference between the three.”

I haven’t achieved true wisdom but I have enough to know that all the education, degrees, and fact gathering in the world can’t give you wisdom. Wisdom is something that comes from time spent with God. In the greatest and worst moments in our lives we achieve wisdom. God teaches us how to respond to life in these moments; God teaches us about grace, humility, favor, mercy, and most of all about love.

Wisdom is knowing how to trust God at all times. I think Jesus had this in mind when he spoke to God on the Cross. It is important to remember that he spoke honestly from his place of pain and despair—“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46); and his place of trust and release—“...into Your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

REFLECTION/CHALLENGE: The most frequently used word in this passage is “get”, and it is used in the imperative. It is not a request or even a simple statement; it is a command. The text suggests that more than reflection and prayer are required to obtain wisdom. We’ve got to do something. Jesus’ example to us is always that our struggle to achieve should not be for material gain but instead for the betterment of the kingdom of God. What you working to get? Who are you working to get it for?

Min. Yolanda Norton, After School Coordinator and Minister to Children and Families, National Baptist Memorial Church 2010-2011

JOURNAL ENTRY

REASON WITH SPIRITUAL EYES AND EARS

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes
see, or decide by what his ears hear;

Isaiah 11:1-3

The prophet Isaiah is foretelling the birth of Jesus through the use of metaphor as he prophesies that the house of Jesse will bring forth a man of God, led by the Spirit of God. This man will have a spirit of discernment; his reasoning will not be based on what he sees or hears with His physical senses. He will reason based on what he sees and hears with “spiritual” eyes and ears.

It is God’s desire that you are led by that same Spirit, to help you discern right from wrong, good from evil and love from hate. As God’s eyes and ears here on Earth you must depend on God’s guidance. If left to your own accord, you are easily deceived. What you see is not always what you get.

I am reminded of the lyrics from a popular song, “I can see clearly now, the rain has gone, all of the dark clouds have rolled away.” That is exactly what happens when you go deeper in your relationship with Jesus. You begin to process life situations through the eyes of your spiritual selves and you hear more clearly in your quietness.

PRAYER: Father, draw me closer to Thee, that I might more clearly see; increase my awe and fear, that I may more divinely hear. Amen

Cathy Edwards, Office Manager for National Baptist Memorial Church Office

THROUGH OUR ACTIONS

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

John 17:20-21

To get the full picture of the text, it is important to read verse 20-21 in the larger scriptural context (John 17:6-24). In the preceding versus (6-19), Jesus is praying for his disciples before being arrested to face the cross. The disciples who walked with Jesus are the “them” verse 20 is referring. In our main text today, Jesus is praying for us. He is praying for us that we will show the world that God sent Jesus into the world.

How do we show to the world that God sent Jesus, the Messiah, into the world?

We accomplish that by doing what Jesus told us. We must let the world know through our actions that we are following Jesus. For example, God is compassionate and willing to forgive. We should do likewise so others may come to know Christ. We must show God’s love by treating all people with respect, whether they are Christian or non-Christian.

Let us talk to God, ask what we are to do, listen for a reply and then do it!

PRAYER: Dear God, we pray that we may be examples to other people. You are a God who will accept people as they are. Help us show that we believe by following what Jesus’ teachings. Assist us to grow better day by day to be better followers.

Kenneth “Ken” Oberly, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

BE STRONG IN YOUR FAITH

I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Colossians 2:1-5

The way these verses spoke to me was as a call to understand that we all have conflicts in our lives. A way to deal with challenges is to give encouragement to one another. Believers should love one another, which God can use to make himself, his blessings and assurance known. God is with us in everything we do and face in this world.

We do not know the things that God knows. We should not let circumstances or situations allow us to follow or be led by deceitful people or persuasive words. Even though you can't physically see God, know that God is always with you. Rejoice and continue to be strong in your faith. Christ will see you through.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father may I always remember that my great conflicts should be used to gather Your people together to worship and praise You. Help me be encouraged and be an encouragement. Let me forever remember that You are always with me and may I continue to rejoice. In Jesus name, thank you, Father Amen.

Nicole Vincent, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

FATHER KNOWS BEST

*A wise son heeds his father's instruction,
but a mocker does not respond to rebukes.*

Proverbs 13:1

There is something about growing up that makes us think we know everything. Teenagers always think they know more than adults. They are determined to be their own men or women and insist upon making their own decisions, despite what others may have to say. We often shrug our shoulders and shake our heads in the face of these strong-willed adolescents; but how different are we when it comes to our relationship with God? God tells us one thing, but somehow we believe we have a better plan. We are prone to make a mess out of our lives because we refuse to accept God's word and the counsel of the Holy Spirit.

Why do we think we are wiser than the one who created us? Perhaps wisdom isn't the issue; but rather it is our desire to have our own way. We want what we want so badly, that we can't be receptive to any other way. Secretly we question whether God can match what we have planned for ourselves. But he is a Father who loved us so much that he was willing to give his only Son as a sacrifice for us. What love could be greater than that?

PRAYER: Father, help me to trust your wisdom over and above my own. Amen.

Rev. Melissa Brown, Author and Life Coach,
National Baptist Memorial Church Revival Preacher 2011

WISDOM: APPLIED TRUTH

The book of Proverbs tells us about people who have wisdom and enjoy its benefits.

REFERENCE	THE PERSON WHO HAS WISDOM	BENEFITS OF WISDOM
Proverbs 3; 4 A father's instruction	Is loving Is faithful Trusts in the Lord Puts God first Turns away from evil Knows right from wrong Listens and learns Does what is right	Long, prosperous life Favor with God and people Reputation for good judgment Success Health, vitality Riches, honor, pleasure, peace Protection
Proverbs 8; 9 Wisdom speaks	Possesses knowledge and discretion Hates pride, arrogance and evil behavior Respects and fears God Gives good advice and has common sense Loves correction and is teachable Knows God	Riches, honor Justice Righteousness Life God's favor Constant learning Understanding

PRAYER: Lord, make me the person who has wisdom. Make me loving, faithful...
(continue to pray the list from above for yourself). Grant me Lord the benefits of wisdom.
Amen.

IT TAKES WISDOM

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Luke 2:52

Healthy, growing, thriving individuals progress through four critical stages of development in the course of their lifetime: 1) infancy; 2) childhood; 3) adolescence and; 4) adulthood. Our growth and development is instinctive, God-ordained and not of human design. We reach each milestone as God has purposed in a progressive fashion, irreversible with the passing of time. Yet our spiritual lives are often not as linear, but require effort, practice and pursuit. Many stops and starts on journey with God can cause us to feel as though our walk is not progressing. It takes wisdom to mature at the pace of God and remain faithful to a process that is slowly emptying us of every vice and spiritual deformity that would stunt our growth in him. No friend or family can offer words to express the dealings of God in an individual person. It's a private, surgical procedure that invades our being and prunes our soul of the layers of our sinful nature. When we reflect on the life of Jesus we see in him a progression that he desires for us so that every step in our journey draws us closer to our Lord's example.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, my earnest prayer is to be more like You. Help me grow according to Your timing, so through every stage of my development Your example is reflected in my life. In Jesus Name! Amen.

Rev. Dawn Sanders, Director of Missional Programs, Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention

SEEK WISDOM IN ALL THINGS

Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Colossians 2:20-23

This passage made me think how the world is very enticing. There is always a person, place, smells, spoken words, etc that can lure you away from God. During my life, I sometimes found myself pondering "worldly stuff" or living in the "world." I had to go through the "worldly stuff" to understand that the time I spent on the "worldly stuff" removed me from God's plan for my life.

My minister shares regularly during his sermons that we are only visitors in this world. We are God's children and we must seek God for our knowledge. We must read and study scripture, surround ourselves with like-minded Christians who seek God's wisdom, and attend a bible teaching church. God has us in the world so others may see our new life which is powered by the Holy Spirit. Others should see a difference in our lives as Christians. This Christian life can only be accomplished by seeking God's wisdom. Praying, meditating on the word, attending church, serving in your church and serving others are only part of our Christian life. We have to ask for and follow God's wisdom each and every day.

CHALLENGE: List those things in your life that you need to let go of and ask the Lord to guide you through that process.

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

IN SEARCH OF WISDOM

*The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction.
Proverbs 16:21*

After reading my assigned devotional scripture, I asked myself, how does one become wise in heart in order to become discerning? So, I decided to look for the definition of wisdom.

In search for the simplest definition of wisdom; I turned to the Children's Dictionary. I assumed if they wrote it so simple that a child could understand it; surely this definition would be the right one for me. It defined wisdom as "Intelligence and good judgment in knowing what to do and what is good and bad and right and wrong."

This definition seems to make sense, but it still did not tell me how to have a "wise heart." I needed to understand how one gains good judgment, knows what to do, and learns what is good, bad, right and wrong? So, I continued to read everything they had written under the definition. And there it was, in the last written statement under the definition—"a person gains wisdom through learning and experiences."

PRAYER: Lord, teach me how to study your word; so that I may learn exactly what you are trying to teach me. Help me to gain an understanding of Your scriptures, so that I may have daily discernments of Your will for my life and make decisions that are pleasing to You. Lord, help me to see the lessons in my experiences--both good and bad. And help me to have positive and uplifting conversations with those who are in my presence. Amen.

Theodra Washington, volunteer, National Baptist Memorial Church

ARE ALL THE CHILDREN WELL?

*A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom, but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother.
Proverbs 29:15*

When most people read this text, they focus on the discipline of a child. As a matter of fact, older translations often read: "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left *to himself* bringeth his mother to shame." However, the text is not about the insufficiencies of children; it is instead about the failings of adults. If one reads the larger text surrounding verse 15, it is clear that the author seeks indictment on the powerful that oppress, offend, and neglect the weak, helpless, and disenfranchised.

This text is no different! Children do need discipline but they also need love, time, affection, and attention. In order to give children that level of care, we as adults have to be mindful of our priorities. First, we must remember that no one person is exempt from the responsibility of caring for our children. We must all take advantage of those moments when we can nurture our young people. Second, we must remember that no amount of money can replace our presence in OUR children's lives.

In Africa, the Masai tribe is one of the most powerful tribes. Amongst the tribal warriors the traditional greeting is: "Kasserian Ingera". It means, "How are the children?" Even warriors with no children of their own respond, "All the children are well." This simple yet powerful greeting is indicative of how highly the Masai culture regards children and their well-being. They know that if the children are well and cared for that the society will continue to flourish.

Are the children well?

What are you doing each day to ensure that our society is not disgraced by the neglect of children?

Min. Yolanda Norton, After School Coordinator and Minister to Children and Families, National Baptist Memorial Church 2010-2011

JOURNAL ENTRY

REFLECTION

Take time and write how you can become “light” to someone. Ask the Lord to give you the words to write.

Now, ask the Lord to show you someone or somewhere where you can let your “light” shine. Pray for the courage and boldness to be light where God sends you.

REFLECTION

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

JOURNAL ENTRY

ASKING FOR WISDOM AMONG THE SEEMINGLY FOOLISH

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.

I Corinthians 1:30-31

The city of Corinth was by no means unusual, because Christianity spread most rapidly amongst the lower classes of Mediterranean society, and in a class-conscious society it became offensive. The riff-raff were being converted, saved, and changed. God picked out the scum of the earth and made them kings and priests of his kingdom. This is the way of God, his wisdom, the power of the gospel.

By using such methods God is overthrowing one of the false standards of the world (the notion that those who matter to him are the wise, the well-bred, the articulate, the gifted, the wealthy, the wielders of power and influence). A church and a disciple on journey with God will always be misunderstood creatures by the standards of the world and our activities may often be labeled *foolish*. Our journey is one not with the world but one with the Creator and that is a travel that the world will never understand. So keep your head up, eyes open, ears attentive and heart and mind vulnerable and continue the journey; even when it seems foolish.

PRAYER: God, thank You for using me to be Your instrument in all things, even the foolish. Amen.

Rev. Ricky O. Creech, Executive Director/Minister, District of Columbia Baptist Convention, Washington, DC

LETTING GOD'S WISDOM LIGHT OUR LIVES

Who is like the wise man? Who knows the explanation of things? Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard appearance.
Ecclesiastics 8:1

Have you ever met someone whose face seems to glow and whose smile radiates deep love? Simply being in the presence of such a person has a calming effect. On the flip side, we all know how a person's face can tighten with anxiety, fear and anger. Even though they may try to cover it with a smile, the inner reality shows through.

God has called us to shine and the key is wisdom. Wisdom is the foundation for so many things—serenity, discernment, calm in the face of difficulties, faith in the midst of uncertainties. Wisdom is built out of experience, from knowing that Christ is our rock and protector. How many times have we faced a seemingly impossible challenge only to have God make a way out of no way?

The next time you are faced with a challenge that seems impossible and worry begins to dim your inner light, stop and write a list of all the times God has seen you and your loved ones through.

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, may I always remember that You are the true Source for all my needs. May I carry this wisdom out into the world and be a shining example of Your light and love to others. Amen

Holly Bass, member, National Baptist Memorial Church

THE FOUR TONGUES

What we say probably affects more people than any other action we take. It is not surprising, then, to find that Proverbs gives special attention to words and how they are used. Four common speech patterns are described in Proverbs. The first two should be copied; the last two should be avoided.

THE CONTROLLED TONGUE	Those with this speech pattern think before speaking, know when silence is best, and give wise advice.	Proverbs: 10:19; 11:12, 13; 12:16; 13:3; 15:1, 4, 28; 16:23; 17:14, 27, 28; 21:23; 24:26
THE CARING TONGUE	Those with this speech pattern speak truthfully while seeking to encourage.	Proverbs: 10:32; 12:18, 25; 15:23; 16:24; 25:15; 27:9
THE CONNIVING TONGUE	Those with this speech pattern are filled with wrong motives, gossip, slander, and a desire to twist truth.	Proverbs: 6:12-14; 8:13; 16:28; 18:8; 25:18; 26:20-28
THE CARELESS TONGUE	Those with this speech pattern are filled with lies, curses, quick-tempered words—which can lead to rebellion and destruction.	Proverbs: 10:18, 32; 11:9; 12:16, 18; 15:4; 17:9, 14, 19; 20:19; 25:23

PRAYER: Lord, tame my tongue. May it be controlled and caring, not conniving or careless. May my words be life giving and affirming, not deadly. Amen.

LIVE OUR LIFE AS GOD CALLS

Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Daniel 12:3

Don't brag! How many times have we been told to be humble about our gifts and abilities? Don't show off. Don't make a scene. Don't brag.

Yet we are told that with the wisdom of God we will shine and that others will find us. How are we to shine with God's wisdom and stay humble at the same time?

When we try to show off our wisdom and intelligence we are not living with righteousness. The wise do not relish telling people when they are wrong or what the proper thing to do might be. We live our lives as God calls us to live them and people will notice. People will see that you are righteous with God's wisdom and will be drawn towards you. They will hear the wisdom of God and not a word will be spoken.

PRAYER: Help us, Lord, to be humble in our yearning for wisdom. Let us show Your wisdom with our whole lives. Amen

Rev. Dr. Jonathan Malone, Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church of East Greenwich, Rhode Island (2011 Mission Team Leader to National Baptist Memorial Church)

WHAT TIME IS IT?

The fruit of righteousness is a tree of life; and he who wins souls is wise.

Proverbs 11:30

Wisdom or being wise gives one deep understanding, sound judgment, and the possession of inside information. It gives one the ability to see what is not evident to the average mind; and the power to distinguish and select what is true, appropriate or excellent.

Wisdom teaches us how to live disciplined, successful lives.

We live in a time of weapons of mass destruction, suicide bombers, terrorist threats, political scandals, bank failures, home foreclosures, high unemployment, rampant abortion, and even open Satan worship.

So I ask, What time is it?

It is time to have a close personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is time to ask God for his wisdom. The Bible says in Matthew 6:33, seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all else will be added unto us. If we put God first every morning he will show us how to navigate around danger--seen and unseen. God will give us inside information and clear direction when facing difficult situations.

PRAYER: Jesus come into my heart and save me. Forgive my sins and shortcomings. Cleans me of anything that would hinder me from receiving your great wisdom and direction. Amen.

Vivinee' Garner-Jones, "Reverend Mother"