



FOREVER FAITHFUL

29 Reflections on God's Compassion in
Black History

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UNFAILING COMPASSION

Thomas O. Chisholm authored the words to “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” about one hundred years ago, and his lyrics continue to resonate with people around the world. More recently, in 1995, CeCe Winans released a gospel music version of the hymn on her *Alone in His Presence* album. And in 2021, country music artist Carrie Underwood added her flavor and invited CeCe Winans’ soulful harmony on *My Savior*, Underwood’s live Easter Sunday production. In one of many YouTube presentations, a group sings the hymn’s stanzas in Creole (Haitian), then in Tamil (Asian), Igbo (Nigerian), and Vietnamese (Asian). In diverse languages, these singers praise God’s unfailing compassion through the words of the prophet Jeremiah’s message:

*It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed,
because his compassions fail not.*

They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

—LAMENTATIONS 3:22–23 KJV

From ancient days to the present, across culture and continent, and in every generation and situation, God’s faithful presence and power persist. God is faithful to all who call on the name *Jesus*, our only Savior, who is “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (HEBREWS 13:8). God loves us. God’s compassion gives us hope: Jesus Christ gave His life to pay the price for our sin. His Spirit is within every Christian believer, day after day and forever.

Reflecting on God’s faithfulness inspires our continued trust. This *Our Daily Bread* VOICES special edition with reflections on His faithfulness in Black history reminds us to hold on to God’s unchanging love for each of us and the power for living He gives. We pray these devotions encourage you in your relationship with God, help you engage in reading and remembering Scripture, and that you enjoy—as Jeremiah proclaimed, Chisholm’s hymn underscores, and so many sing praises about—God’s mercies, morning by morning.

Out of Egypt I called my son.

Hopes and Fears

In 2022, during a conference at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, Black youth reflected on “the talk” their parents gave to protect from contentious, deadly encounters with police. They gathered in the face of recent violence, remembered the four girls murdered in the 1963 bombing at that church, the horrific lynching of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till in 1955, and more. The Black youth candidly revealed how the talk meant to protect them against violence and injustice actually instilled panic and doubt.

Jesus’ parents guarded His life. Jesus was the target of genocide during King Herod’s reign of terror (MATTHEW 2). Herod, infuriated that he was unable to find the Christ child, “gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under” (v. 16). Jesus was safe in Egypt because “an angel of the Lord” gave His earthly father Joseph a “talk” about how to circumvent danger: “Get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt” (v. 13). Joseph obeyed, staying in Egypt with his family until Herod’s death (v. 14).

We live in a world where our lives, including children’s, are not always cherished and protected. Yet we can tell them that Jesus truly empathizes with our consternation and fear. He too was martyred. His birth, death, and resurrection ushered in eternal hope, peace, and salvation like none other the world has ever seen or known.

TONDRA L. LODER-JACKSON

**How do you find solace in the hope you have in Christ
amid the fears you have in life?**

*Faithful Father, God with us, help us to hope,
and to instill more hope in our children.*

*One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.*

Passing Down the Promise

A legacy of faith exists in my family. My paternal grandfather kept his family active in church. Visiting my dad's relatives in Randallstown, Maryland, I found evidence of the passed-down faith. Uncle Henry still played saxophone at the family church. Walking around the cemetery behind the church later, we read the aged headstones of other family members. My father had become a pastor, my siblings and I work in ministry, and we've raised our kids to honor God.

The Black experience is rooted in and tied to faith in Christ Jesus that has been shared from generation to generation. Each generation is created in God's image: you, me, and our ancestors (GENESIS 1:27). That includes innumerable Black people and people of color. The African man who carried our Savior's cross down the Via Dolorosa, Simon of Cyrene (LUKE 23:26). The Africans present when the church began (ACTS 2:5–11). The Ethiopian eunuch whom Philip witnessed to and baptized surely passed down his experience and testimony to fellow Africans and others (8:26–40). In fact, some early church fathers such as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine were Africans who left writings still honored and studied in seminaries worldwide.

Passing down the promises of our faith is an honored way of life practiced by Black individuals and families. Speak of God, teach the truth of the Bible, and live as an example: this passes God's faithful promises to our children.

SHARON NORRIS ELLIOTT

What are three ways to “pass down” the faith in God's promises to your family and community?

*God, help me to internalize the importance of
bequeathing my faith in You to the next generation.*

*Christ will be exalted in my body,
whether by life or by death.*

Honoring a King


The news of Chadwick Boseman's death from cancer in 2020 at the age of forty-three shocked fans around the world. Many had celebrated Boseman in 2018 when he played T'Challa, the regal king and title superhero character of the fictional African nation of Wakanda in *Black Panther*. Even his costars in the movie were shocked, since Boseman kept his health issues private. Plans for a second movie starring Boseman had to be rethought and expectations managed as the work of grieving began. Director Ryan Coogler decided to make a second film that honored the man the cast and he had come to love.

Jesus didn't keep secret the fact that He would die (SEE MATTHEW 16:21). But His disciples couldn't hear Him over their expectations for the long-awaited Messiah. Two of Jesus' followers expressed their disappointed expectations to the "stranger" who walked beside them on the Emmaus road. "We had hoped that he was the one . . . to redeem Israel," they said (LUKE 24:21). The stranger—Jesus—quickly set them straight. He died and rose to life for them. They could honor Him by living for Him.

The apostle Paul decided to honor Jesus no matter what life threw at him. "Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death" (PHILIPPIANS 1:20). You can make the same choice. This might mean prayerfully surrendering plans and managing expectations of how you think life "should" go. LINDA WASHINGTON

**What do you think honoring Jesus means?
How will you do that this week?**

*Jesus, thank You for Your willingness to die for me.
Help me live for You.*



¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

¹⁹ "What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

*But those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.*

We Go High

Over the years, the number of African American women earning a graduate degree has increased, despite the existence of laws that once prohibited equitable access to an education. Our ancestors challenged these laws that made it impossible for individuals in disenfranchised communities to reap the benefits of better employment opportunities and higher wages. The growth in the number of African American women with graduate degrees is not only a reflection of the unshakable faith of our ancestors, but also calls us to soar beyond the depths of their limitations and the heights of their accomplishments. No matter what obstacles and challenges we have faced, God is faithful.

It's amazing how God will continuously renew our strength (ISAIAH 40:31). Even when we attempt to do something that seems impossible, He has a way of moving us beyond our fears to a higher calling. God trains us with His Word: "Do not be dismayed, for I am your God" (ISAIAH 41:10). God "will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in [him]" (ISAIAH 26:3).

God's plans for us are often beyond what we could ever ask or think. In His strength, we can achieve more than our ancestors ever dreamed. As we stand on the shoulders of those whose sacrifices charted a path for us, we are constantly reminded of God's presence. His faithful love carries us from generation to generation.

CAMILLE HUMES

What have you been asking God to give you the strength to do? Despite any challenges, how will you begin working toward your goals?

God of perfect peace, I am thankful that because of You I have the strength to do what You have called me to do.

*There is more than enough room
in my Father's home.*

A Place for Us

Sharonne McGee satisfies her passion for serving others primarily by helping people buy their own home. She says, “The effects of housing discrimination along with lack of credit, little savings, and miseducation have hindered Black people and others. I’m working to change that.” This Kansas City real estate professional educates potential buyers about overcoming these obstacles and discrimination. Unfair lending practices and “restrictive covenants” historically kept Black people from US communities with higher property values, better schools, and other advantages. In 1968, the Fair Housing Act began to change that for continuing generations’ benefit.

The Bible record reveals that God has been more than a faithful provider of shelter; He has been a “place” of refuge. God delivered the Israelites from the disadvantages of Egyptian slavery, and He took them into the promised land, giving them places to dwell within “large, flourishing cities” (DEUTERONOMY 6:10). Responding in worship, Moses said, “Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God” (PSALM 90:1–2).

God has prepared an eternal place with Him for all who receive faith in His Son. And Jesus has promised, “There is more than enough room in my Father’s home” (JOHN 14:2 NLT). Jesus is our way to everlasting life. All of His promises give us hope wherever we live now and promise a home with God forever. ADRIENNE WARTTS

How can you respond today to Jesus’ words in John 14? Who can you encourage to believe in God and believe also in Jesus?

*God, thank You for being my supreme shelter now
and in eternity.*

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion.

Ever-Present Comfort

When the HIV/AIDS crisis emerged in the 1980s, there was speculation and fear. Dr. Michelle Rojas was on the front lines of the epidemic in South Carolina. As cases increased, Black patients were slow to speak out and seek care; they faced stigmas on many fronts and often were only referred to specialists. One of only a handful of Black women MDs in the area, Dr. Rojas was sought out by patients. She followed God's calling to establish a first-of-its-kind community care program for HIV/AIDS patients in South Carolina. Through decades of service in various programs and clinics in the state, she has made a historic impact.

Her model reflects God's heart and encourages us to share His gifts of compassionate comfort with others. Our loving Father cares for us, not just so we can be comfortable, but so we can "comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 CORINTHIANS 1:4). Rojas serves with an open door to those in need of care in challenging times with love, grace, and the gospel.

Throughout history, God has been faithful and generous in providing comfort through His people so that we can share His hope and compassion with others. In our Christian walk, we "share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ," and we can be assured that "so also our comfort abounds through Christ" (v. 5). MONIKA R. A. MILLER

**What challenging spaces has God called you into?
How can you be a vehicle of His compassion and comfort
in those spaces today?**

Father of compassion, God of all comfort, I am so grateful You're with me in troubling times. Help me abound in comfort for others through Christ today.

Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.

Greater Than Our History

Young Black filmmakers, such as Gina Prince-Bythewood (*The Woman King*), J. D. Dillard (*Devotion*), and Chinonye Chukwu (*Till*) are making history by bringing to light untold stories of the trials and triumphs of Black people. Their films tell stories of a people whose history does not begin and end with slavery but rather with nobility.

As we consider these films' inspiring messages—respectively, royal African heritage; the soaring career of the Navy's first Black fighter pilot; and a mother who by faith overcame the disfiguring, brutal death of her beloved only son—we are reminded of who Black people are and prompted to consider who each of us can become.

As individuals, when we become believers in Jesus Christ, we are granted nobility as “co-heirs” (ROMANS 8:17). We are lifted to “heavenly realms in Christ” (EPHESIANS 2:6). This is made possible by the faithfulness of God through the suffering and death of God's one and only Son (JOHN 3:16).

However great the history and the achievements God allows Black people, these glories cannot be compared to the glory God has destined for all of us who believe and whom He conforms to the image of His Son. The same God who knew what we would both suffer and achieve in this life is the same God who foreknew us and gave us His Son so that we might become like Him. Our destiny is, indeed, greater than our history! MELANIE JOHNSON

How can you find ways to celebrate both the great history of Black people and the destiny that God has made possible for you through Jesus?

Heavenly Father, I thank You for my history, and for the glorious destiny of being conformed to the image of your Son.

*Then Hannah prayed and said:
“My heart rejoices in the LORD.”*

Help When It's Hard

The moments leading up to my son's delivery were the hardest of my life. Every negative thought went through my head. *What if there are complications? What if my child is born unhealthy?* The pain and tension of the moment were hard to bear. Still, I had to keep pushing through. The preparation of the previous nine months was all for this moment. I powered through contractions and an intense delivery, and my husband and I welcomed our beautiful son into the world!

In the Bible, Hannah prayed earnestly for a child. When questioned by Eli the priest, she explained, “I am a woman who is deeply troubled. . . . I was pouring out my soul to the LORD” (1 SAMUEL 1:15). She was barren and was taunted for her infertility, but “in her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly” (v. 10). Then “she made a vow,” essentially making a deal with God to give her a son whom she would give back (v. 11). God honored her (v. 17), and she later welcomed a son, Samuel!

What should we do when we desire something from God? We should pray about our desires, though it may be God has something else in mind. After Hannah birthed her son, she exclaimed, “My heart rejoices in the LORD” (2:1). May God help us through the difficult places and somehow bring us to a place of rejoicing.

CHELSEA JORDAN

**What hard thing or deep desire can you
ask God about in prayer?**

*God my Rock, please be with me in every hard thing in life.
Help me to rely on Your Spirit to guide me.*

I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back.

The Art of Keeping On

On June 10, 1966, a man stood before a crowd of thousands in Soldier Field, Chicago. As he closed his sermon, he said: “Sometimes I feel discouraged and feel my work’s in vain. But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again. ‘There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole.’” The man was Martin Luther King Jr., and the speech critiqued Chicago’s unequal housing policy. King confronted the worst aspects of American society, from death threats to actual assassination attempts. However, he never quit despite the rabid opposition against his fight for civil rights.

When the whole world is against us, where is God and how do we persist? King likely asked himself such questions throughout his life; the people of Judah may have asked similar questions while being taken to Babylon and held there in captivity. God’s message came to the exiles in a letter from the prophet Jeremiah that put things in perspective: “ ‘I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’ ” (JEREMIAH 29:11).

Through time, this verse has held true for many believers in Christ, including Dr. King. However, there are moments in our daily lives when we might lose our confidence or even our hope in God. In those times, somehow we must remember to trust in God and keep moving forward.

ANTHONY JONES

Has there been a time or circumstance when you were unsure about the future? How has God encouraged you or reshaped your expectations about the unknowns of life?

God, please deepen my trust in Your faithfulness.

*So do not fear, for I am with you...
I will strengthen you and help you.*

Faith Overcoming Fear

Ona Judge, a slave of the United States' first president, remembered her mother's words, "Accept freedom's hand if ever it is extended." Her mother, also a slave in the Washingtons' household, instilled in her daughter the vision of being free. Despite Ona's nightmares of being recaptured and beaten to death, she knew that her Creator didn't make her to be someone else's possession.

Ona moved swiftly on her journey toward freedom and never looked back. She pushed any turbulent thoughts away and prayed that she would make it safely to the ship. Fear tried to overcome her as she hid in an unlit tiny cupboard on the ship. Then she heard her mother's voice say, *Quiet yourself, my sweet black-eyed butterfly*. Ona knew that she was no longer alone and that God's strength would get her to freedom.

The Israelites also understood the reality of tasting freedom by overcoming fear. While in captivity, they cried out to God to give them freedom. God spoke through the prophet Isaiah, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (41:10).

In Scripture, God continually instructs us not to be afraid because His presence will strengthen and enable us to experience freedom. Freedom from our fears is available as He upholds us in His righteous right hand.

ROSLYN YILPET

**Do you believe that God is with you as you face your fears?
Are you willing to allow God to strengthen you
and give you victory over your fears?**

*My Creator God, help me to overcome any fears
that block me from my freedom in You.*

*He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.*

He Was Rejected Too


My heart dropped as my coworker lamented over the discrimination she had faced in college. Her voice trembled with anger and hurt: “No one included me, so I often worked alone on group projects.” While disgusted about the racial injustice she had experienced, I was grateful that I didn’t experience similar discrimination. Over time, some colleges have developed greater respect for ethnic groups.

I joined a Bible study with other Black students that taught us how Jesus Himself grew up within a stigmatized people group. He was from a farm village of nobodies. “Nazareth!” someone exclaimed. “Can anything good come from there?” (JOHN 1:46). Jesus understands what it’s like to be rejected—including for your identity. Isaiah wrote prophetically of the Messiah, “Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering” (53:4). *Our* includes all rejected people groups. Isaiah continues, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed” (v. 5). Jesus was persecuted by people who didn’t acknowledge Him as God’s Son, our Savior. We can be set free from sin by receiving Him instead of being bound to discrimination.

In college, God showered me with His love through believers who understood how to overcome rejection. Sadly, my coworker didn’t have that experience. But God used my coworker’s story to inspire me to appreciate how He restores us. TORIA KEYES

**How have you experienced God’s empathy and acceptance?
Have you shared His love with others?**

*Dear Father, give me courage to seek You to heal from the sting
of rejection because of my identity. You understand my pain;
please bring me comfort and joy.*



¹ Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

⁴ Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. ⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. ¹¹ After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

¹² Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

*You are the light of the world.
A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.*

We Carry the Light

What is this “light of the world”? In Michelle Obama’s second best-selling book, she shares her stories and personal insights about what she calls “inner brightness.” She writes that each of us should seek truth and apply our potential to better even the most challenging situations. The Bible guides us to Jesus: “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind” (JOHN 1:4).

Jesus was “the true light that gives light to everyone” (v. 9). Jesus Himself said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (JOHN 8:12). Remarkably, Jesus also told His followers, “You are the light of the world” (MATTHEW 5:14). Each Christian believer carries His light through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the resulting attitudes and actions shine and glorify God. God never promised to remove the darkness from this world. Rather, He sent the Light into the world, and after He returned to heaven He taught us how to carry His light through the Spirit’s power.

Sometimes we may wish to escape dark situations when God has called us to light up those very situations with His truth and the very same goodness the Father has shown us through Jesus. As the light of Jesus radiates through us to others by what we do and how we live, may people give glory to God (2 CORINTHIANS 4:6).

MELANIE JOHNSON

What’s your first response when God calls you into dark or difficult situations? What actions can you take to illuminate the lives of those around you?

I praise You, God, that Jesus lives in me, and You have called me to carry Your light into a dark world.

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

Put Him First

“**A**cting was my god,” Letitia Wright explained at a conference. But a turning point came during a bout of depression. An actor friend, who was a Christian, advised her to give Jesus a try. She took her friend’s advice and gave her life to Jesus. But she sensed that God wanted something more from her. Did she trust Him enough to give up acting and continue seeking Him, not knowing if she would ever return to it again? The answer was yes. Months later, God surprised her by allowing her to return to acting. Wright auditioned for the role of Shuri in *Black Panther* and was given the role.

Abraham knew what it was like to be asked to give up what he greatly loved. God waited until it was physically impossible for Abraham’s wife Sarah to conceive and give birth at ninety. Therefore, we can only imagine how Abraham felt when God told him to take his son Isaac “to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering” (GENESIS 22:2). Abraham obeyed. Yet before he could sacrifice his son, God gave him a ram to kill instead.

Abraham and Letitia Wright chose to put God first. In fact, Wright’s friend gave her Matthew 6:33: “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.” God wants first place in the hearts of His children—above people and even God-given desires and abilities. Are you willing to do that?

LINDA WASHINGTON

**What’s standing between you and God?
What would it take for you to become willing to sacrifice it,
even if He gave it to you?**

*God, I need Your help to surrender anything
that has my heart outside of You.*

*Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD.*

He Hears Your Voice

When I was a college freshman, my roommate and I were watching a Black sitcom one Saturday evening when a scene familiar to me but peculiar to her appeared on the screen. In it, the characters were in church, praising God in a manner often attributed to charismatic traditions and the Black church. They were waving their hands and shouting. My roommate wanted to know if that's how Black people really are in church. Coming from a laid-back Christian experience, she was used to quieter expressions of "Amen."

Whether we honor God with shouting and dancing or more reserved expressions of faith, He welcomes and desires audible praise. In Psalm 150:5, the psalmist writes, "Praise him upon the loud cymbals" (KJV). The word *loud* is translated from the Hebrew word *shema'* meaning, "something heard," like a sound or an announcement. God does want to hear the voices He gave us, and He doesn't want us to be shy in letting Him or those who are listening know how much we adore Him. We were created to praise Him, not just with our mouths, but also with our attitudes and "everyday, ordinary . . . sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life" (ROMANS 12:1 MSG).

Whether you tend to be as loud as a lion or as quiet as a mouse (no matter your upbringing or denominational persuasion), let God hear your voice—the voice He gave you—when you praise Him.

JENNIFER LUVERT LEE

Have you ever felt uncomfortable expressing your love for God in front of others? Do you ever feel uncomfortable when your fellow churchgoers loudly express their love and praise for God?

Father, I will tell how wonderful and beautiful and faithful You are and how good You've been to me.

*They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever.*

Hope-Giving Generosity

When He blesses us, God desires that we bless others. Though media narratives have historically shared negative images of Black people with stereotypes that feed feelings of discontent and hopelessness, our true history tells a story of Black people being generous—even sacrificial—givers.

After more than twenty years with the McDonald's Corporation food franchise, Don Thompson made history in 2012 as their first Black CEO. During his three years at the helm, he built a legacy of philanthropy to the poor—the kind of righteousness described in Psalm 112 that “endures forever” (2 CORINTHIANS 9:9). In 2014, Mr. Thompson and his wife, Liz, started The Cleveland Avenue Foundation for Education (The CAFE Group) with a mission to support college access and career attainment for those in under-served communities.

Through The CAFE's programs, they are carrying out God's command to do good, be generous, and be willing to share (1 TIMOTHY 6:18). They have been vocal about their faith and live out Psalm 112:5: “Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely.” The Thompsons are living proof that “whoever refreshes others will be refreshed” (PROVERBS 11:25). Their kindness honors God's love for a “cheerful giver” (2 CORINTHIANS 9:7).

Whether hailing from humble roots like the Thompsons or born into wealth, our generosity pushes back against negative narratives and makes a hope-giving impact.

E. DANIELLE BUTLER

In what area can you extend generosity to others while acknowledging God's generosity to you?

Father, help me to be a cheerful giver of my time, talent, and resources.

He and all his family were devout and God-fearing.

Making a Difference

My husband and I read together every Sunday morning. Right now, we're reading *Raising Kingdom Kids* by Tony Evans. We get a glimpse into Evans' family life, where it's evident that they love and respect each other. He strives to live Ephesians 6:4: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." And in return they live out Exodus 20:12, "Honor your father and your mother." I'm lucky to witness this family as they live the example in building families in the ways of God.

Mary and Joseph are also good examples of being obedient to God in raising a family. Joseph stayed committed to marrying Mary even when he could have chosen not to (MATTHEW 1:18–24). Joseph moved his family to Egypt to protect them when there was danger from King Herod (2:13–15). Mary and Joseph made decisions for their family that ensured they would follow God's instructions carefully.

Many individuals have made history on their own, but it's extraordinary when a family can make a difference together. More likely than not, the relationship we have with our families will leave greater impact than any other relationship we have. Isn't it lovely when we can walk in unity with our families and go deeper in God's ways together?

CHELSEA JORDAN

**What can your family do together that brings God joy?
If your family needs unity, what's a first step toward
coming together with love and respect for each other?**

*God, help me to leave a lasting, positive impact
through my family that brings You glory.*

“My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.”

Leaning on Jesus

When singer Da'dra Greathouse required surgery to remove a growth near her vocal cords, she experienced difficulty finding a surgeon who believed a successful outcome was possible. She testifies that God directed her to the right doctor. The surgery did affect her singing; she needed months of vocal therapy. Throughout her ordeal, she leaned into her faith.

The possibility of being healed must have seemed impossible for the man Jesus saw lying near a pool. Jesus asked him, “Do you want to get well?” (JOHN 5:6). “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred” (v. 7). Then Jesus replied, “ ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.’ At once the man was cured” (vv. 8–9). Christ showed power to heal the man’s body, and while performing that miracle, Jesus revealed His identity as the Son of God who heals us from sin. This was similar to when Jesus healed the people in Galilee, and news about Him spread all over Syria. People plagued with severe pain, demons, seizures, and paralysis were brought to Him, and healings occurred as Jesus preached the good news of repentance for forgiveness of sin (MATTHEW 4:23–24).

We can call on God and lean on Jesus in faith even when our circumstances seem overwhelming. We can always trust that God sent Jesus to heal and free us from our sins. *ADRIENNE N. WARTTS*

**What issue has caused you to struggle with hope?
How has your faith helped you?**

*Father God, thank You that whenever I feel discouraged,
I can come to You in the name of Jesus and trust that
You're working to help and bless me.*

The LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.

Always with Us

Although known for her exceptional poise, Amanda Gorman grew terrified. First Lady-elect Jill Biden had selected the young poet to perform at President-elect Joe Biden's 2021 inauguration. However, given the internal pressure Amanda felt, a raging pandemic, and political violence fourteen days beforehand on the same Capitol steps where she would recite, she considered backing out. She asked God for increased faith and direction. Amanda Gorman delivered "The Hill We Climb" and became the youngest inaugural poet in US history.

In Scripture, God assured Joshua of His presence to help him conquer his fears. He told the new leader of the Israelites, "The LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (JOSHUA 1:9). God's faithfulness bolstered Joshua's confidence. After Moses died, God had chosen Joshua and then issued a "get ready" command and battle plans. This centered Joshua's focus toward being "strong and courageous" to conquer and settle the land God had promised to Abraham's descendants. As long as Joshua followed the law given through Moses (v. 7), God promised success both in his mission and in life.

Whatever God raises us up to do, He sees us through. He's forever faithful in extending the provision of His presence to prevent discouragement. God is always with Christian believers, wherever we go, directing and blessing our paths. To overcome fears, His strengthening power can be experienced through studying Scripture, praying, and trusting God and His promises as we persevere. *CHERIE TRAHAN*

How has Scripture shifted your fears? How has Scripture strengthened your faith to soar in your calling and serve through your gifts, as you trust God for your future?

Father, as Your Word guides and empowers me, may I never let fear dictate my path or motivate my decisions.

In all things God works for the good of those who love him.

Trusting God's Pathways

Vivien Thomas was a carpenter when he began saving to attend medical school. After he lost his job and earnings during the Great Depression, he found janitorial work in Dr. Alfred Blalock's lab. Blalock, a heart surgeon, recognized Vivien's talents and promoted him to medical lab assistant at Johns Hopkins University. For thirty-five years, Vivien supervised surgical laboratories, pioneered heart surgery techniques, and taught surgical procedures to others who became prominent physicians. However, low wages and discrimination hindered his ability to attend medical school to become a doctor and surgeon.

When Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, God was with him as Potiphar's slave in Egypt and helped him succeed in everything (GENESIS 39:1-3). Potiphar put Joseph in charge of his household, entrusted him with everything he owned, and left everything in Joseph's care (VV. 3-6). Despite being falsely accused and imprisoned, Joseph later interpreted Pharaoh's dreams and consequently was put in charge of the entire land of Egypt (41:41). Sometimes we set time frames for achieving our goals without remembering that "in all things," God is ordering our steps for good (ROMANS 8:28).

God elevated Vivien from a carpenter to one who saved lives long before he was awarded an honorary doctorate and an appointment to the medical school faculty at Johns Hopkins University. We too can trust God's pathway toward our destinies and realize we are being led by our faithful God to realize our dreams. *ADRIENNE N. WARTTS*

**What barriers to achievement have you faced?
How did God reveal the promise of your life?**

Heavenly Father, thank You for revealing to me who You've molded me to become. Please help me stay focused on glorifying Your name.

We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.

Portraits of God's Goodness

Barack Obama, the United States' first African American President, together with First Lady Michelle Obama, among other achievements, broke racial barriers. Their official White House portraits, unveiled September 7, 2022, will forever hang inside "The People's House" and radiate hope.

As Christians, we're portraits of God's goodness. Together in Christ, God makes us illuminate His amazing grace. In Ephesians 2, the apostle Paul affirms the place gentile believers have in God's masterpiece: "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (v. 10). When gentiles believed the good news about Jesus, their rescue from sin and death helped create diversity in the church, a spiritual family for both Jewish and gentile believers. God's gift of grace includes all who believe in Jesus and frees us from the power of divisive, culture-driven ways. In Christ, we become His new creations by God's unmerited kindness and mercy. We share common ground: all of us were dead in "transgressions and sins" (v. 1). We all need deliverance. By grace, through faith, God establishes spiritual "connection" and starts us on a "journey" together.

The Obamas' journey birthed new possibilities for what can be achieved, and brought fresh, new images of that to life. Believers are made "alive with Christ" (v. 5)! God's resurrection power breaks the barriers of sin forever and transforms us, giving us the hope found in Jesus.

CHERIE TRAHAN

How might God's grace, love, patience, and faithfulness inspire you to achieve good works that also project the same?

Jesus, thank You for the gift of life to do good works that reveal and spread Your goodness.

*But if we hope for what we do not yet have,
we wait for it patiently.*

Completing the Work

Throughout Black history, people have waited patiently for God's fulfillment of their dreams, hoping for the unseen. God gave me a dream to open a children's library in West Africa when I was a young missionary there in 1978. As abolitionist Frederick Douglass said, "Once you learn to read, you will be forever free." Parents couldn't afford to buy books for their children and no public libraries existed. My heart yearned for the children in my community to know the freedom that literacy provides. My dream was fulfilled in May 2022.

Paul reminds us that waiting patiently with hope and expectation is part of this life's journey, even as we await eternity with God. He wrote, "But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently" (ROMANS 8:25). Paul reminds us that waiting for the unseen can be hard. Yet, God's Spirit within us enables us to hope for what we can't see (v. 24). We believe and wait for that day when Jesus Christ will return for those who believe in Him.

When the children's library opened with more than thirty children regularly attending, my heart overflowed with gratitude. God had provided. Despite the uncertainty of how and when, I knew that God would fulfill what He had placed in my heart. Waiting patiently on God makes our hopes a reality—in His timing. *ROSLYN YILPET*

What are you patiently waiting for in hope and expectation?

*Jesus, give me the endurance to keep waiting
for what You inspired in my heart.*

*Your beauty....should be that
of your inner self.*

True Beauty

Twenty years ago, *Eve* magazine conducted a poll that named thirty-six-year-old actress Halle Berry the most beautiful woman in the world! Berry is still considered a beautiful woman, though beauty standards vary and physical looks change. The current “top ten” lists include new generations and individuals who reflect the changing standards.

When God called us out of the “darkness” of sin into the “wonderful light” of salvation (1 PETER 2:9), we gained a beauty money cannot buy. We can’t even earn it. It’s a gift from God not because we deserve it but because He loves us so much. God didn’t just make us over to ensure we wouldn’t remain dead in sin. He saved us so we could fulfill a specific purpose in His kingdom work. It’s a gift given without hesitation or regret, and God will never renege on it. Our position in Christ is eternal; unlike physical beauty, it never fades away.

When we embody our salvation, we reflect God’s heart: the unconditional, unchanging love of the Father. When we work out our salvation—by seeking God daily through prayer, reading the Bible, walking in love toward others, and serving through our local church and beyond—we reflect God’s glory. Thus, salvation is our best feature, and our commitment to doing the work of God’s kingdom lets the world know that we’re His masterpiece.

JENNIFER LUVERT LEE

**When we embody our salvation, we reflect God’s glory;
our witness is our best feature. In what ways do you reflect
God’s spiritual beauty?**

*Beautiful Savior, I am overwhelmed by how much You love me.
Thank You for making me over, for giving me beauty that
never fades, and for trusting me with the work of Your kingdom.*

*I have learned to be content
whatever the circumstances.*

On Fire to Serve

Whether on the stage or behind the scenes, Deena Weems Thornton—volunteer, nonprofit leader, fundraiser, and communications professional—shows up on fire to serve for every event. Five times she has been named one of Philadelphia’s Most Influential Community Leaders by *The Tribune* for her servant leadership and philanthropic efforts. Her mother, Helen Weems, passed away in 2006 due to heart-transplant rejection, motivating Deena to expand the community work she was already doing to become a vocal advocate for a heart-healthy lifestyle.

In Philippians 4, the apostle Paul provided a powerful “secret of being content in any and every situation” (v. 12). As is often quoted, he knew that contentment in all things comes “through him who gives me strength” (v. 13). When we serve and give of our time to others, sometimes we reap immediate benefits, while other times we seem to come up empty-handed. No matter the result, we can learn to be content when we serve in His strength.

Thornton uses her professional work with the American Heart Association, her leadership with Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., and her personal time through social media and volunteering to encourage people—especially Black people—to make small choices to overcome the histories of poor health outcomes and healthcare disparities that exist. Through the ups and downs of life, we can find contentment in answering God’s call to serve others and rely on His ever-present strength in completing our mission.

MONIKA R. A. MILLER

What circumstances make it difficult for you to find contentment? How can you lean into Christ for more contentment today?

*God, thank You for being with me in all of life’s circumstances.
You are enough.*

*When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you.*

Ever-Present Comfort

On February 25, 2022, a “Hallelujah!” and “Amen!” rippled across the country when Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson answered yes to the president’s historic nomination to become a Supreme Court justice. Ugly and personal attacks from critics didn’t deter her. Nor had earlier negative comments from a high school counselor who warned young Ketanji not to set her career sights so high. With strong faith in God and sheer determination, she refused to give in or give up. Brown Jackson publicly clung to her belief that God would be there to protect and guide her. This bold faith helped propel her to become the first Black woman to sit on the US Supreme Court.

In life, we’ll all face opposition, hatred, and lies. For many people, this may bring on fear. However, we needn’t fear because God is faithful, redeems us, and is our God. In Isaiah 43, He reassured the nation of Israel of His perfect watch over their life journey despite the hardships of captivity and exile. “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you,” God said, “and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you” (v. 2).

Although others may try to defeat us, and naysayers may oppose us, yet we can boldly trust our faithful God to watch over and protect us. We can rejoice, knowing that He sees all and there is nothing outside the control of His loving hand.

LISA D. ROBINSON

When have you felt attacked or afraid? How might you look to God for protection and comfort?

Dear God, the world can be scary and evil. Help me to be bold and to always keep my faith and trust in You.

*We have different gifts,
according to the grace given to each of us.*

Minding My Business

When I started my first business over twenty years ago, I knew that I was among a modest number of African American business owners. I also knew that the number of Black business owners had increased in recent years, despite their limited resources and economic challenges. Drawing from the strength of my ancestors, who created successful businesses with much less than I could access, I was most excited about providing a service to my community. I was determined to use my education, training, and gifts to reduce the stigma about mental health services and increase access to care. I believed that if I positioned myself to serve, I could use my business for the good of God's kingdom.

The apostle Paul said, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us" (ROMANS 12:6). Believers in Jesus can discover and use their gifts to serve others in the church. As we create businesses that allow us to use our gifts and talents outside the church, we create opportunities to teach, encourage, and give to others who may not yet know and trust Christ (vv. 7–8).

Building businesses is one way to ensure that we leave a legacy. It also allows us to honor those in our past who had to "make something out of nothing" while strengthening generations to come. As we continue to use our God-given gifts, the legacy of His love continues as well.

CAMILLE HUMES

What has God gifted you to create? How will you use it to serve others?

Generous Father, I thank You that Your grace has allowed me to give in a unique way.

The LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Help from On High

T Tyler Perry attended church with his mom at an early age, but deep emotional wounds created a pain he would not be able to shake, even though he became a billionaire actor, producer, and philanthropist. Since Tyler had suffered homelessness and abuse in his past, he was determined to love himself. The honest revelation of his past drew him into a lifelong healing journey. In the process, he has created spaces to help and love others. Perry has shown compassion, and he has shared that his help comes from God.

God loves to heal our hurts and delights in helping and restoring us. When our circumstances seem gloomy and depressing, we can look to the One from whom our help comes. Scripture beautifully illustrates this point in God's people making their pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem (PSALM 121). David announced the source of his help while looking toward the hills: "My help comes from the LORD" (V. 1). God would keep him, "from all harm" (V. 7) and watch over him "now and forevermore" (V. 8).

Even during trials and tribulations, God is able to surround his children with love and protection, as the hills surrounded the Israelite travelers on their pilgrimage. God is good all the time. We can always look to God who is forever our Help! Today, let's celebrate Jesus' never-ending love.

LISA D. ROBINSON

**We serve a God whose love is sustaining and everlasting.
What is one thing you can thank God for today?**

*Merciful God, when life gets tough, remind me that
my help comes from You.*

*Every good and perfect gift is from above,
coming down from the Father.*

God's Gifts

Demonstrating strong, gifted mathematical abilities at a very young age, Katherine Johnson graduated from high school at the age of fourteen and majored in mathematics in college, graduating summa cum laude. She went on to use her God-given talent to become the first African American to be a pioneer space scientist. Her coworker Dorothy Vaughan was also a skilled mathematician who was considered a “human computer” before computer machines were common. She was the first African American to supervise a group of staff at the NASA Space Center. Both women had a deep faith in God, and they used their gifts and talents to become leaders in their respective fields.

The apostle Paul is a biblical example. A Pharisee by religious tradition and tentmaker by trade, God called him to follow Christ, and he used his God-given gifts as a teacher, missionary, and prolific writer (ACTS 18:1–11). “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father” (JAMES 1:17), and we are to use the talents God has given us. “A gift opens the way and ushers the giver into the presence of the great” (PROVERBS 18:16).

This was true for Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament, and of pioneer space scientists Johnson and Vaughan. You have gifts to use for the Lord, and He will faithfully guide you.

PARRISH L. HILL

Describe one of your gifts. How do you or can you use it to serve God and others?

God of all peoples, You have given me talents that exalt Your name. I desire to use my gifts and talents for Your kingdom.

*I thank my God every time
I remember you.*

A Growth Mindset

The hope and history of our Christian faith includes legendary Black Americans like educator Mary McLeod Bethune. She endured much in pursuit of what we today classify as “a growth mindset.” She came to view knowledge and education as extensions of her Christian missionary work. Bethune sought to transform society, knowing *God* had begun good work in her as an educator of Black people, and she trusted Him to expand and complete her work.

From prison, the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the believers at Philippi, to encourage their faithfulness to their work of spreading the gospel (SEE ACTS 16). They were “partners” in the ministry Paul had pursued (PHILIPPIANS 1:5). He gave thanks to God for their prayers, giving, and the gospel work they would carry on after him because Paul’s hope and confidence rested in God’s power and commitment to finish His good work more than anything else (v. 6). Our own striving toward a growth mindset can be with hope. The power of God in our lives allows us to be willing to try more things, take more risks, and live more confidently in Christ.

African Americans have historically confronted many challenges to their educational pursuits. Yet, faith in God gave Bethune and gives us the strength to rise up and stand against all sorts of obstacles and barriers as He completes the good work He’s begun in us.

DENESE L. JONES

Remembering our ancestors’ quest to learn, how can you develop your desire to invest in God’s kingdom work while creating a legacy of growth, learning, and faith for others?

Our Father, today everyone seems to have an opinion about the best way to obtain a growth mindset. Remind me to look to Jesus as my ultimate example of who You have called me to be.

*I can do all this through him
who gives me strength.*

Empowered by God

Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth was one of the four founding ministers of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and he endured bombings and beatings while organizing protests in Birmingham, Alabama. These protests were pivotal in laying the groundwork for much of the civil rights movement afterward. He was one of its most courageous leaders, fearlessly putting his life on the line to end segregation. He once said to a group of college students, “I tried to get killed in Birmingham and go home to God because I knew it would be better for you in Birmingham.”

In Philippians, the apostle Paul’s knowledge is framed by God’s compassion and faithfulness. The ability of the Christian to rejoice, pray, and be at peace (vv. 4–7)—coping in every state of life—is summed up like this: “I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (4:13). Christian believers understand that in coping, we have the power to both withstand and transcend our challenges because of Christ.

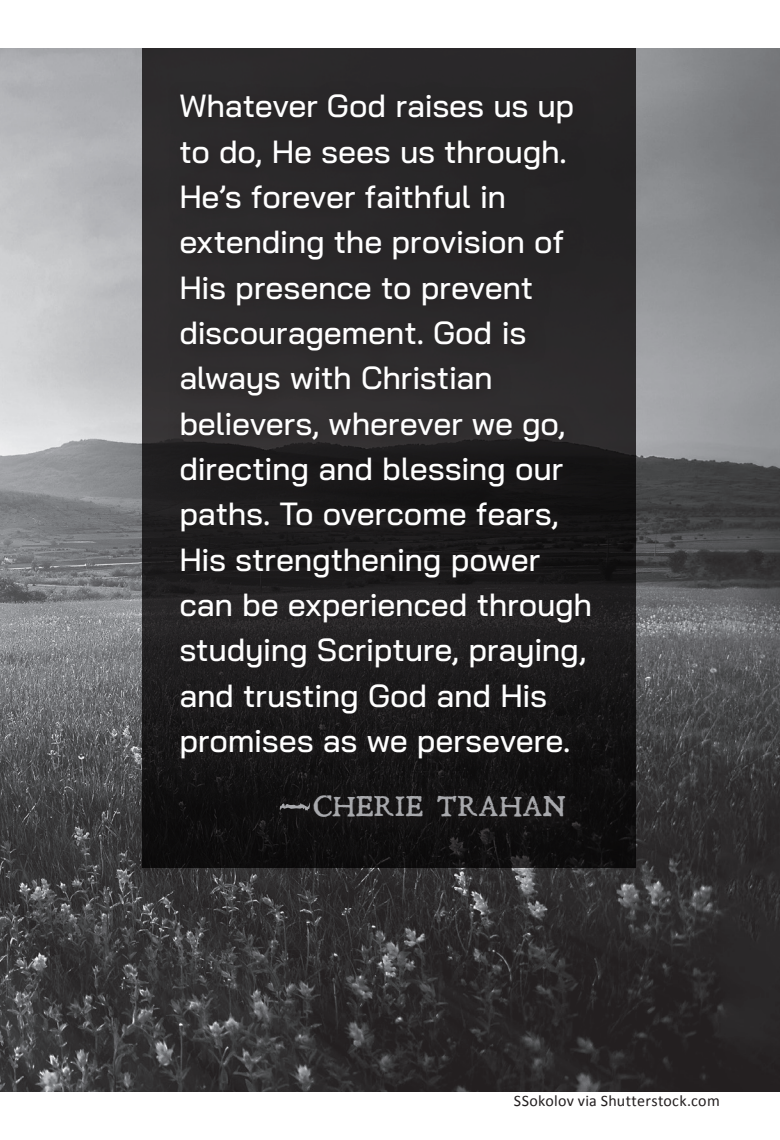
What made Reverend Shuttlesworth so fearless? The following quotes may be a clue. He once said, “The best thing we can do is be a servant of God. It does good to stand up and serve others.” Shuttlesworth also said, “We have come this far by faith—not by violence.” He knew that his strength came from an awesome God who empowers us to endure.

NOEL HUTCHINSON

What obstacles do you face? How will you and God conquer them?

O God, help me to become aware of the power You have placed in me. Remind me that trust in You can remove fear and cause me to do great things in Jesus’ name.



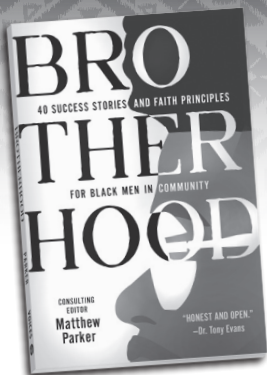


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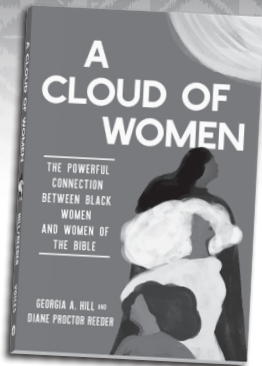
— CHERIE TRAHAN

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