



PCC Scroll

Spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ and equipping the People of God through the written word.

Word of the Quarter—My sheep know my voice: Transaction vs. transformation: Relationship building beyond routine behavior

Editing Team

In the last issue of the *PCC Scroll*, we began a new overarching theme: “Discerning Truth: Learning to Recognize the Character and Word of God in a Sea of Information.” We came from the subject “My Sheep Know My Voice: Your Road to Emmaus.” In this issue, we continue the overarching theme with the topic “My Sheep Know My Voice: Transaction vs. Transformation: Relationship Building Beyond Routine behavior.”

Attended Sunday worship service. Check. Attended Wednesday Bible Study. Check. Attended Saturday prayer service. Check. Paid tithes and offering. Check. Don't get us wrong. Attending these services is important for building a relationship with God as well as the people you fellowship with—your church family. And your financial stewardship is important for keeping the church doors open for ministry. However, we must be mindful that God wants to be more than an item we check off a to do list. God wants to build an intimate relationship with you that will lead to your transformation.

When the editing team met, one of the editors shared an experience she had while attending a concert. There were around 300 people in attendance, who were all singing. At

some point during the event—amongst the crowd of singers—she focused in on a familiar voice. It was her mother, a voice she knew because of relationship.

Being able to hear God's voice like that takes time. This issue's “Women of the Bible” features Hannah. Samuel was her long-awaited first child, who she turned back over to God. In 1 Samuel chapter three, we see the first time God spoke to Samuel. In verse seven, the Bible says Samuel did not know the Lord yet and the word of the Lord had not been revealed to him yet. So, Samuel did not recognize God's voice. He thought the voice he heard was Eli's. So, each time God spoke, Samuel—who was around 12—would run to Eli. Finally, Eli realized what was happening and told Samuel how to respond. From there, Samuel grew in God, and he was able to recognize God's voice. Samuel went on to be a great prophet, and he was the prophet who anointed David to be king.

When we began our walks with God, we had to learn to hear His voice in the same way Samuel did. It took time. In the age we live in, there are so many voices

out there; voices that compete against one another. Like the editor who heard her mom at the concert, God wants us to recognize His voice in the sea of other voices. But how do we know if it is God's voice, especially at first. The first thing is that God will never tell you to do anything against His character or word. So, knowing God's word is an important part of hearing His voice. When we have questions, we can go to God in prayer and seek wise counsel. There is also often peace that comes when we are heading in the right direction.

God does not want transaction! God wants transformation, so we must make space for it. Transformation does not happen automatically and is an ongoing process, which continues our entire lives. In Romans 12:12, we learn that part of transformation is the renewing of our minds.

In this season, we need to go into deeper depths with God. In this age of information, we need to know the character, word, and heart of God and align our steps accordingly.

Editor's Corner—Watch your transactions

Sister LaTonja Brown

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**I'm not sure
about you, but I
am ready for
due season!**

I recently purchased tickets to see *The Wiz*. I was rushing, and it wasn't until I confirmed the order that I realized I was not on the Fifth Avenue Theater's official website. In retrospect, there were warning signs in the process, the biggest being the excessive processing fee. I retraced my steps. I had used Bing (instead of Google) to search for the theater name. The real website was fifth on the list and buried beneath secondhand websites, which mimicked the real thing. It was only in reading the fine print that you would know.

For this analogy, I would consider the Bible to be the official website. Any transactions or data sources should align with it. Otherwise, the transactions will have a higher cost. It was a learning experience to pay attention to any warning signs and to read the fine print. In addition, I find Google is a better search engine, so always use trusted resources.

A few weeks later, I got an email from Amazon about being safe from scammers during the holiday season. The main tips to avoid being scammed included going directly to Amazon's website—not the URL provided in any email—and knowing the types of information the company would never ask for. The email also outlined the common scams, which involve order confirmations and tech support.

It is important for us to know the character of God, so we can know what types of requests that would come from Him. A huge part of this goes back to knowing the Bible and knowing God's character. God will never ask you to do anything that is contrary to His character or word.

We are probably all aware of common phone and email scams. Scams that normally use fear to create a false sense of urgency, which causes us to act before we think. The calls range from student loan payment delinquency to expired car warranties to IRS tax scams. Then there are the spam emails. Emails that range

from a Netflix payment not processing to a locked bank account to an undelivered FedEx package. Scammers really cast a wide net, and you may receive a phone call or email about something you don't even have, which makes some scams easier to identify. Others are not so obvious, but we can equip ourselves with some tools to recognize what is legit and what is fake—knowing that scammers are constantly changing their tactics.



There are also common scams in the spiritual realm, which is why Ephesians 6:10-17 talks about putting on the whole armor of God to fight against these tricks. Our armor includes the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (the word of God).

If you fall for a scam—in the natural or spiritual realm—it will cost you. Some common tricks used to take us off course from our walk with God are fear, distractions, and doubt. When we are caught up in our emotions, it impacts how we react to the situation and the people around us. We can wear the whole armor of God to combat this. For example, when Jesus was tempted, He used the sword of the Spirit to combat the temptation.

So double check your resources, read the fine print, and make sure your choices align with the word of God and the calling that is on your life. If something doesn't align, feel free to say, "No," and keep moving.

Because of the pandemic, 2020-2022 were interesting years. I have high hopes that the work I have been doing will bear fruit in 2023. This is not just my prayer and hope for myself, this is also my prayer and hope for you as well. I'm not sure about you, but I am ready for due season!

From the Archives: Word from our Pastor—An Intentional Lifestyle *Suffragan Bishop Wilford T. Hairston*

“God has called us to live holy lives, not impure lives. Therefore, anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human teaching, but is rejecting God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you,” 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 (NLT).

At the beginning of each year, we are challenged to make improvements in our lives. The question is whether or not you will accept the challenge and design a plan of action. I am not talking about making some new resolutions that won't be kept. I want to encourage you to make the kind of changes in your life that will bring permanent change. As a pastor, I think that means you must first change your heart. If you can change your heart, you can change your behavior. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 23:7, “...as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” If you change the heart, you can affect your thoughts and then your deeds (behavior). We also may have to stop and reexamine our commitment to God and His will for our life. Commitment must be a core value that you embrace in

order to be successful spiritually, as well as in your natural goals.

Last year is behind us now. As we say, “It is what it is,” and nothing we do now can change it. However, we have a fresh opportunity in this New Year to challenge ourselves and make the kind of changes in our lives that will enhance us both naturally and spiritually.

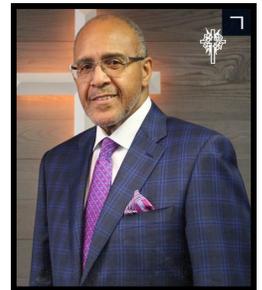
The pressures and circumstances of life can be a huge influence in determining our spiritual character. Adversity can be the crossroads that can cause a person to go in one of two directions: the path of spiritual growth or the path of compromise.

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In choosing the path of spiritual growth, you need to be intentional, which involves creating a plan that supports your choice to follow Christ and grow.

As we know, one of the devil's devices is “indifference.” If he can get you to “give up,” and not care, he has you defeated! In his book,

By Design or Default, Kevin Gerald stated, “When a man is indifferent toward life, he is indifferent toward the plan of God that placed him here. Without even realizing it, that indifference will destroy the harmony God intended people to experience as partakers of the life He has given them. Out of that indifference emerges a discontent that causes people to look for an escape through various vices.”



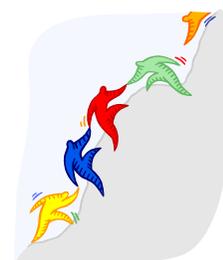
As we move into this year, let's be intentional about our approach to both natural and spiritual changes in our lives. This requires a serious effort on your part and must be by design (planning) rather than just thinking it will happen because you're a church member. That's what it means to be intentional! Yes, identifying those things that you struggled with last year but didn't defeat would be a great start to cleaning up those “leftovers” from last year.

Prayer Requests:

- ♥ Pastor and Minister Jo Ann
- ♥ National and local leaders
- ♥ Military and their families and veterans
- ♥ Youth, families, singles, and marriages



Empowered by God to Empower Others



Women of the Bible—Hannah

Sister La'Shandra Perkins

Name: Hannah

Meaning: Favor or grace

Her Character: She had a deep faith.

Her Sorrow: She was barren.

Her Triumph: God favored her with children.

Key Scriptures: 1 Samuel 1:2-27, 2:1-11

In the time of the Bible, women had no standing. A woman was the property of her father until a good match was made, then she became the property of her husband. So, when a woman's name is used in the Bible, you better get ready to take notes and ask God for insight on the scriptures you're reading because there's a lesson to be learned. There's so much we can say about this mighty woman named Hannah. She teaches us to pray persistently because she approached God constantly and laid it all at His feet. Through Hannah, we learn to worship God and give Him the time He requires from us.

Hannah's issue was that she was barren. For a woman living during those times, it would have been a social embarrassment, and she would have

been looked down upon. We know from 1 Samuel 1:6 that Hannah wasn't barren by any sin of her own doing. When I read that the Lord shut her womb, I took it to mean that He was making her wait, and He had something important for her to do. She had to be ready—not just spiritually ready, but mentally and emotionally ready as well. Hannah

allowed her barrenness to make her resentful, bitter, and miserable. She couldn't see that her husband loved her more than anything, so she missed out on joy. Hannah was her husband Elkanah's favorite wife. His second wife, Peninnah, kept having children, and I know that must have felt like a slap on the face to Hannah. She assisted with Peninnah's children, but it wasn't like having her own. Her turmoil blinded her from what was right in front of her, but—no matter how she felt down and like an outcast—she didn't forget her love for God. She didn't forget to pray.

Hannah was transformed on one of the family's yearly trips to Shiloh. Peninnah made Hannah's life more miserable with torment and bullying on these trips but this fueled Hannah. Hannah did not hide her pain; she bravely let it be seen. That was the first spark in her transformation as we

As a woman who knows what it is like to be told you're infertile, I don't know how Hannah prayed for a child to only relinquish it.

see in her prayer in 1 Samuel 1:10-11. She poured her sorrow into prayer, and she pressed into God.

She prayed in her heart in silence, but she still moved her lips—causing Eli to think she was drunk (1 Samuel 1:12-17). At that moment, God took her deeper, and she was transformed and reached a new level. She caught the attention of God's servant, and God remembered her. As much as Hannah wanted

a child, she knew that, if God blessed her with a child, the child wasn't truly hers. As a woman who knows what it is like to be told you're infertile, I don't know how Hannah prayed for a child to only relinquish it. I believe she knew deep down that her child would do more doing the Lord's work than being raised at home with her and tending the fields.

Hannah kept her word to God without expecting anything else. Once her son, Samuel, was weaned, she returned and gave Samuel back to God. The Lord blessed her with two more sons and two daughters. Hannah did not let her misery keep her from calling on God's name. She didn't let the circumstance of her barrenness keep her from being transformed into the mother of Samuel, who would play a major role in the transition from judges to kings. Let's learn from Hannah. Regardless of the pressure, labels, or thoughts that this world, society, and people try to place on us, we must be brave in our grief and still go to the throne of grace to worship our Lord and Savior—knowing that He will hear us like He heard Hannah.

Men of the Bible—John

Sister Cassandra Broomfield

Name: John; also known as John the Divine, John the Evangelist, John the son of Zebedee, and Boanerges, which is translated as Sons of Thunder

Meaning: Yahweh has been gracious.

His Character: Loving and gentle, yet also aggressive.

His Sorrow: Witnessing the crucifixion of Jesus.

His Triumph: Writer of the book of John, the epistles of John 1-3, and the book of Revelation.

Key Scriptures: John 11:3-5, Luke 9:54, John 18:15-16, Mark 1:19-20

John was a fisherman with his brother, James, working in their father's business. One particular day had been unfruitful. John, James, and their partner, Simon, and the crew had worked throughout the night fishing and were out of their boats washing their nets. A stranger entered Simon's boat and asked Simon to go back out. The stranger then instructed Simon to cast his net again. Simon told the stranger that they toiled all night but told the stranger he would let down the net. He caught so many fish that the net broke. Simon signaled for John and James to join him and both boats were so full that they began to sink.

Imagine if someone walked up to you and encouraged you to keep going just as you reached the point of exhaustion and frustration. They motivated you to put in more work, and they insisted that the finish line was in your reach. This is what

happened to John, James, and Simon (Luke 5:1-11). They were astonished, and John, James, and Simon did what the majority of us would not have done. They left their life of prominence, comfort, and wealth and began following Jesus.

While Jesus saw John as gentle, caring, and affectionate, Luke recorded John as aggressive and filled with fury. Luke told the story that happened in a Samaritan village. The people had refused to shelter the Messiah, and John and his brother asked the Master for permission to command fire from heaven and burn them all.

Although they were rebuked by Jesus for having another spirit in them, they let it be known whose side they were on.

This would be fitting for the disciple whom Jesus loved. John had been with Jesus since Christ's earthly ministry began. He began following Jesus from the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret. After the incident with the fish, he heard

They left their life of prominence, comfort, and wealth and began following Jesus.

Jesus encountered a man covered with leprosy, and Jesus touched the man and the man was healed (Luke 5:12-13).

Just a few days before, John had been fishing with his brother. Then one man came and began to talk to

his partner, and his partner listened and believed. That one act propelled John into his purpose. John believed that he could do all that Jesus had done and taught because of his relationship with Christ. He had seen Jesus turn water into wine at a party in Cana, heal a nobleman's son from death, heal a man at the sheep-gate pool, walk on water, feed five thousand, heal a man who was born blind, and bring Lazarus back from the dead.

John was a witness to the glory and the pain. He heard the whispers regarding the plots against Christ. He saw the anger of the religious sect, and he witnessed the denial and skepticism of the crowds. But the more the Messiah talked, walked, healed, and lifted up everyone around Him, the more John loved Him.

There was something more. John was thought to be a cousin of Jesus. Scholars believe that John and Jesus were related through their mothers. So, for Jesus to love John the way He did was more than a faithful disciple relationship; he was family. For three years, John followed and supported the ministry. He stood at the foot of the cross and was given the charge of taking care of the Messiah's mother. John was a trusted and loyal friend. John received that clarion call to follow and then to teach, and he obeyed.

Your Money Matters—Transaction vs. transformation

Sister LaTonja Brown

I recently updated my monthly budget due to increases in my homeowners' dues, condo insurance, and auto insurance. This came at the heels of updating my budget due to rising costs of groceries, toiletries, and gas. Since inflation has occurred globally, everyone reading this can relate. From necessities like gas, food, and housing costs to wants like eating out, going to the movies, and other extracurricular activities, prices have gone up. I shop at Grocery Outlet sometimes, and its prices are what stores like Safeway and QFC used to charge. Furthermore, Dollar Tree and Dollar General are no longer \$1 stores, they are more like \$1.25 stores.

Everywhere we turn, we are faced with rising prices. Since most of us are on a fixed income, as costs increase in one area, funds allocated to another area must be decreased. For most of us, any cost-of-living increase received in 2022 fell below inflation—in some cases way below—which feels like a pay decrease. While looking at my budget—for a quick second—I did think about the money I would “save” if I didn't pay tithes and offering. I know; I know, “Shame; shame; shame.”

But—just as quickly as I thought it—I thought of all the intangible blessings that come from (cheerfully) giving. What I am talking about exceeds financial blessings. I also thought about something pastor's dad used to say during offering at Grace Apostolic

Temple. I was a college student at the time, and one of the reasons I remember the saying is because it resonated. It not only resonated, but it was something that I knew to be true because I had already recognized the truth in my own life. He would always say, “You can't beat God giving.”

I recently had lunch with Minister Rachel, and we somehow began talking about tithes. I shared that one-second thought about not paying tithes with her. She really encouraged me, and I wanted to share what she said to me. But first, let's talk about tithes. The term *First Fruits* refers to the offering of the first agricultural produce of the harvest. In the same way, our tithes (one-tenth part of something)—monetary offerings—are given to support the running of the church.

Getting back to my conversation with Minister Rachel, she shared that the first thing she does with each paycheck is pay her tithes because it is her giving her First Fruits. This was taught to her, and she has seen how giving God her First Fruits has changed her life. In this way, she is placing God first and trusting in His abundance. Furthermore, it's a reminder that everything belongs to God, and she is just a steward

over the resources He has blessed her with.

It got me thinking if my tithes were really presented as my First Fruits. Was it the first thing I gave with each new paycheck or was it just part of the process of paying my bills? Truthfully—

somewhere along the way—paying my tithes and offering had become transactional for me and part of a rote behavior/routine. While a good behavior, it

became a box to check off instead of a sacrifice. So, I am going to implement Minister Rachel's advice of having my tithes be the first thing that comes from my paycheck. Luckily having apps like Cash App and Givelify make it easier to do that.

Seeing my tithes as my First Fruits has adjusted my mindset. It moves me past my rote transaction of paying tithes and offering as something I do to check off a list, and it changes my posture and attitude. I can now present my tithes as my First Fruits, which will serve as a reminder to stay in a position of gratitude and thanks. I truly can't beat God giving.

Furthermore, it's a reminder that everything belongs to God, and she is just a steward over the resources He has blessed her with.

Fit for the Kingdom—Moving from goals to lifestyle changes

Sister LaTonja Brown

The New Year is a great time to look at the last months and make changes. So, people often begin a new year with resolutions. Getting more exercise, losing weight, eating better, getting more sleep, and drinking more water are common health-related resolutions people make. These are all great resolutions.

According to one study, 80% of people have given up on their resolutions by the second week in February, which is not long enough to develop a new habit or behavior. I have a few health goals around eating healthier and getting more exercise, which will hopefully lead to weight loss. So, what can I do to make sure I am within the 20% that fulfill their goals and make lasting-lifestyle changes?

Realistic and achievable

I need to make sure my goals are realistic and achievable. For example, when it comes to eating, depriving myself of foods that I love has always backfired and led to binge eating. This is why moderation is important. So, I am aiming for the 80/20 rule. This gives me room to enjoy the foods I love, while also making sure I am eating mostly clean. The other goal is around working out. I have joined a gym, and I plan on going there at least twice a week, which is doable. Setting an unrealistic goal would only lead to frustration. I'm also keeping my schedule flexible. Some days I will go in the morning before work and other days in the evening after work.

When it comes down to it, I want to leave 2023 healthier (physically and mentally) than when I entered it.

Planning

As I try to eat better, part of my process includes more meal planning. My doctor and nutritionist recommend loosely following a Mediterranean diet, so I am focusing more on poultry and fish and less on beef and pork. If I plan out my main course, I can plan on which vegetables I need for sides, along with fruits and vegetables to snack on. In terms of working out, I can plan my workout days around my after-hour meeting schedule and plan some walks along the way.

Creating new habits

My goal is to replace unhealthy habits with healthier habits that create long-term lifestyle changes. I am changing how I eat. For example, instead of snacking on cheese and crackers, I have been doing cheese and fruit. Also, I am getting in the habit of reading labels for sodium and sugar content—particularly around added sugar—as well as making sure any “whole wheat” item I purchase is actually “whole wheat” and not “whole wheat flour.”

Accountability

Having people who know about your goals and support you is crucial. I have a few friends who want to walk more, so we are planning walking dates instead of going out to eat. This is also the reason I joined a gym. One, paying for it will make sure I go. Two, I am receiving accountability from the

trainers at the gym, as well as meeting new people.

Having a why

Wanting to lose weight has less to do about vanity and more to do about health. Being overweight or obese comes with health issues like high blood pressure. As I get older, I want to be healthy, which means investing in my health now and forming habits that will set a good foundation for good health down the road.

When it comes down to it, I want to leave 2023 healthier (physically and mentally) than when I entered it. Resolutions and goals are wonderful but new endeavors should be part of a planned lifestyle change that can be sustained over time. They must also come with a change in behavior and mindset. If you are not ready for long-term changes, making a list on December 31 will have little impact. If you want to make sustainable changes, think the process over. Developing healthy, realistic goals will improve your health and your life.

Recommended Reading:

- Book of John
- 1 Samuel 1, 2

Creative Expression

Sister Ursula Lovely
Squandered

God has given us this planet that we call home. Over the years, we have discovered ways to ruin it on our own. We treated our legacy as one huge toy. Something that we could play with, experiment with, and destroy. Each country has decided that it should be the overseer and be called number one. So, with wars and overwhelming greed, look at what we have done. If only we could have been satisfied with what was given and fulfilled our needs. If we had acknowledged God as our Lord and creator and used His rules and word to succeed. Here some politicians repeatedly say that there is no such thing as global warming. What do you think? Could all this strange weather just be a Godly warning? We were given the opportunity to freely follow God's laws and to walk down God's path. Instead, so many have chosen to disobey, and, in the end, will endure God's wrath.

Happenings and Events

Bible Study—Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. preceded by prayer at 6:30 p.m.

Family Prayer—Saturdays at 9:00 a.m.

Remember our ongoing food drive!

PCC Scroll Editorial Policies

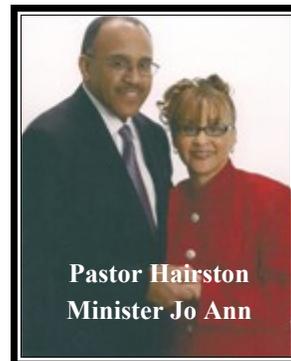
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- Please submit your material electronically. The preferred format is a Word document.
- Please limit your word count to 600 words or less.
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