



PCC Scroll

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

Guest Columnist—2021 Challenges: Beyond the virus

Suffragan Bishop Wilford T. Hairston

The year 2020 was one of the strangest, most difficult years in modern history. It was unprecedented in so many ways from police brutality to protest to political unrest, coupled, of course, with the pandemic. We have all been greatly challenged. Through these months, we've been forced to change in ways we could not have imagined. Through the challenges of 2020, we were offered the opportunity to reflect on the health of our personal relationships, especially our relationship with the Lord.

As I reflected on the pandemic, one of the positive things I noticed is that it brought many people closer together—neighbor helping neighbor. Recently, it seems that our communities and country have been divided and filled with hate. It may be that God wants to use this pandemic to send a message concerning the lack of love expressed to one another. The Bible says, *“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God,”* 1 John 4:7 (King James 2000 Bible). Maybe the church will lead the way and take an introspective look at itself before we criticize the world. In 2021, we should all accept the challenge to take a personal inventory of our walk with Christ.

I believe that there is a divine purpose behind everything that happens. So, we must ask ourselves a question: “What is God saying to

us through this pandemic?” What if God chose to use this pandemic to be the process for change. *“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new,”* 2 Corinthians 5:17. After all, God is the potter, and we are His clay. My prayer is that, as we look beyond the pandemic, we'll see a change, not just in the world, but also in the church. Love must replace hatred and then kindness will be the new norm in our church and communities.

Question: Will you allow God to transform you into a new person in Christ, someone other than who you have been in recent years? If not, you will have wasted a golden opportunity for meaningful change. A simple change in how we see people and love them, especially those that are different: different in color, in belief and in ethnic origin. After what we've been through, is that too much to ask? I think it requires each individual to take personal stock of where they've

been and who they want to become. It could mean a spiritual awakening!

What if God chose to use this pandemic to be the process for change.



Hopefully, as the vaccines are more available and the virus subsides, our economy will improve. But we do understand there may be other residual effects we may need to consider. Mostly, the emotional and psychological impact of being isolated from others and the loss of jobs in our communities. In addition to that, this virus may leave some more lasting impacts on people, especially on our youth and children. In fact, after the pandemic, we should continue to monitor their emotional state; they may need a little extra attention and love.

I believe the way out of this pandemic dilemma is not just through the vaccine, but also through a deeper and more meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ and His Word.

Pastor Wilford T. Hairston

Editor's Corner—Loving yourself

Sister LaTonja Brown

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Perhaps this an oversimplification, but I often wonder how different the world would be if we all simply loved our neighbor.

In Matthew 22:36, Jesus is asked, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” The answer is found in verses 22:37-40, which reads, “Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

This sentiment is also found in Romans 13:9-10, which says, “For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.”

When I read these scriptures, my first instinct is to jump to the, “love thy neighbor as thyself” part. Perhaps this an oversimplification, but I often wonder how different the world would be if we all simply loved our neighbor. In the next issue, we will talk extensively about loving our neighbor. I am so excited to write about the topic, especially as it relates to applying the Good Samaritan parable today.

There is so much fear, anger and hatred even from those who claim Jesus. In the last issue, we talked extensively about loving God. As I wrote then, I can’t validate or invalidate anyone’s Christianity. Hypothetically, let’s say a person genuinely believes that they love God with their whole heart, but still struggles with loving their neighbor. Perhaps the disconnect, which I find perplexing, is not in the loving God part, perhaps the hiccup is in the “as thyself” part. It’s tempting to assume that there is too much self-love going on, but I am beginning to doubt that. Cases of extreme narcissism and bravado often stem from deep levels of self-doubt and insecurity.

This lack of self-worth can have deep roots that stem from childhood and traumatic events from the past. Perhaps a negative script was sown that left doubts about being lovable, worthy or valued. Perhaps healthy love was never modeled. Whatever the reason, feelings of low self-worth can lead to accepting abuse from others, abusing yourself or abusing others, all of which creates a vicious cycle.



Mistakes from the past can also cause self-loathing, so it’s important to forgive ourselves. Don’t be held prisoner to the past by yourself or others. The beauty of the Cross is that there is nothing that we can’t take to God because He extends grace and mercy to all.

There is beauty in being able to love ourselves even in our brokenness. Jeremiah 1:5 says, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” This scripture has always resonated with me. It reminds me that God formed me, even the things I wish were different. God knows me, even the quirks and damaged parts that still need healing. God sanctified and ordained me with gifts and talents to be shared.

Psalm 139:14 says, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” From the billions of people in China to the hundreds of people in the Holy See, everyone in the world is uniquely made. So, love and accept those things you wish were different.

How do we show love to ourselves? Show yourself grace and compassion. Forgive yourself for things that still haunt you. Focus on what you have with gratitude. And, most importantly, remember that God loves you just as He created you and with all of the trials you have been through. He knows and loves you.

Word of the Quarter—Loving yourself

Editing Team

In the last issue of the *PCC Scroll*, we begin a new overarching theme: “Return to love: A review of the basics—Love God, yourself and your neighbor” with the topic “Getting back to basics: Love God.” In this issue, we continue the overarching theme with the subject: “Getting back to basics: Love yourself.” The need for self-love and self-care has been magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic. You can show love and care by taking care of yourself: mind, body and spirit.

Take care of your mental health

The importance of mental health has been amplified during the pandemic. Those who suffer from anxiety or depression may be experiencing them at intensified levels.

Because of the pandemic, we are home more, which has led to a different type of mental stress. Some may be being abused and feel like they are trapped on an island with their abuser. Some who live alone may be experiencing loneliness. For some, home had been the one place for rest and refuge from the world. Now, everything is intertwined there. Home is an office, church, classroom, conference room, doctor’s office, gym and more.

When feeling stressed, try to find positive coping mechanisms, which could include finding ways to express yourself creatively.

Embrace the new normal of this season, which has required adjustments on how we do things. Offer grace to yourself and others because we are all adapting. Forgive yourself when you make mistakes, and acknowledge and celebrate growth.

Take care of your physical health

It’s important that we find ways to exercise, stretch and move our bodies. It’s also important that we consume nutritious foods. The pandemic has led to job loss so some may be struggling with money and food scarcity. If you need help, please reach out for assistance.

Take care of your spiritual health

It’s important to make time for personal prayer, praise and worship and Bible study. Be sure to tune into Sunday morning service, Wednesday night Bible study and Saturday morning prayer when you can to stay connected with the community. All are available via Zoom. If you can’t make a service, recordings of Sunday and Wednesday services are available on our YouTube channel.

It’s important that we don’t self-isolate or self-destruct. It may be tempting to reach out to old, unhealthy relationships and destructive habits, but resist the urge.

Take care of yourself

It’s important to know how to self-care and pamper yourself. For ex-

ample, treat yourself by doing something special each paycheck.

Make a habit of using positive affirmations. Write them down so you see them, and speak them out loud so you hear them.

Do what works for you and your family. Ignore any social pressures and voices that try to dictate what you should be doing. There is no right or wrong way to behave in this season. If you choose to write a book, great. If you choose to rest, great.

Take care of your needs

We live in a culture where people wear “busyness” as a badge of honor. While it’s good to be productive, it’s not beneficial to continuously overextend yourself. Give yourself permission to step back and simply exist when needed.

Being self-aware and asking for and accepting help from trusted family and friends when needed is part of self-love and self-care. It is important to not see your needs as an inconvenience. In order to fully help others, put your own mask on first. In the end, it will benefit your community. You take care of others, so take care of yourself.

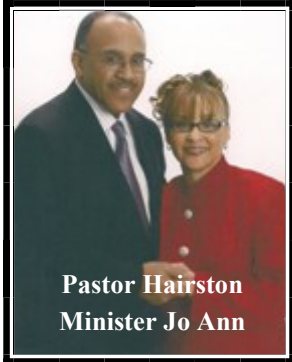
We live in a culture where people wear “busyness” as a badge of honor.

Recommended Reading:

- Book of Daniel
- Luke 10:38-42

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Women's Corner—Taking care of fundamentals

Minister Demetrius Robinson

What we do during this time is crucial. This time is a time to get back to God and back to the basics of taking care of ourselves. It is a time of reflection. It is a time to know thyself: body, mind and spirit.

When you are whole, you are able to help others in love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Galatians 5:22-23 tells us of the fruit of the spirit against such there is no law.

Self-care is the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health. It is the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own wellbeing, in particular during times of stress.

Performing self-care looks different for each of us. Personally, I enjoy a good book, a good movie and vacations to the Caribbean. Getting massages also relaxes my body and mind. How often do you take self-care moments?

As a young woman, I witnessed how mothers in my family often cared for their families more than they often cared for themselves. This usually resulted in different ailments within their bodies, and often early untimely deaths. The narrative, I thought to be true, was to care for all others first and foremost, then take care of yourself. In actuality, when we care for ourselves first, we are then capable of caring for others. Many times, we are refreshed and capable of being more self-aware and present while helping others. If you are too busy taking care of everyone else, you will soon fall apart at the seams.

Get back to the way Jesus lived. He did not live a life of "yes" to everyone. In fact, He told quite a few "no." You may be gifted in several areas of your life, but if you agree to every demand or request, you will burnout. Jesus did not burnout! He did self-care. He often got

away from the crowds, and He knew that the human body could only take so much.

In His humanity, Jesus had limits. He knew this and accepted them. Jesus had to prioritize. Jesus lived in a cadence of life that not only kept Him free from burnout, but it kept Him *full of God*, grace and truth. As He was full of this, He was compassionate and generous to the needs and crisis of His people.

If Jesus, our Savior, took moments to be refreshed, we have no excuse. In His humanity, Jesus recognized the following:

- **Take care of personal needs.** He ate well, rested well, took time to relax and exercised by walking a lot (Matthew 26:18, 20; Mark 1:16, 3:23, 4:38; Luke 7:36; John 10:40, 12:2).
- **Have supportive friends.** He sought after the company of friends (Matthew 26:36-38).
- **Retreat.** He withdrew from the crowds to go away on retreat, alone or with friends (Matthew 14:1-13; Mark 6:30-32; Luke 4:1-15, 5:16, 6:12-13).
- **Be present.** He was present wherever His travels took Him. He was present (mind, body and spirit) to attend to the needs of His people (Mark 1:38).
- **Take it easy.** He was never in a rush, except to go to Jerusalem and embrace His cross (John 11:6; Mark 10:32).
- **Leave it up to God.** He let it all go. He chose not to make things happen but to trust the Father's will (Mark 14:32-42).

The saved life is a consecrated life geared toward God and His will for our life. You are important to the Kingdom of God, so stay committed to your relationship with Him and committed to self-care. It is important to your health and well-being.

Special Guest Recap —Take care of yourself

Dr. Lillian Robertson

Dr. Lillian Robertson of Emmanuel Apostolic Church in Bremerton, Washington, recently spoke at a PCC Women's Ministry meeting about women's health. The valuable information she shared falls in line with this newsletter's theme of "Getting back to basics: Love yourself." Taking care of ourselves mentally, physically and spiritually plays an important part in loving ourselves.

Dr. Robertson reminded us that we are mind, body and spirit. She read 3 John 2:2, which says, "*Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*"

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the black community due to pre-existing health conditions that are prevalent in the community. She encouraged us to find ways to stay healthy and do what we can for our mental and emotional health. Our health (state of wellbeing) is the outcome of choices we make every day. She shared six things we can do to have a healthier life.

1. Move as much as you can—Find the move that moves you

Dr. Robertson described sitting as the new smoking because being sedentary increases health risks. She recommends walking for **at least 30** minutes, five days a week. This can be done in ten-minute increments or by adding steps to your day. For example, parking your car far from a store entrance.

Walking releases endorphins, improves mood, lowers blood pressure, improves the immune system, maintains blood sugar level and helps re-

verse the aging process. Other ways to stay youthful are keeping your weight down, stretching and strengthening your core. It's not enough to just live; we also want to feel good.

2. Let your food be your medicine, and your medicine be your food

Dr. Robertson recommended eating vegetables "like your life depends on it." It's important to eat every color of the rainbow. When you eat, cover half of your plate with them. You are what you eat! Sugar, white flour, white potatoes, white rice and fast food should be eaten sparingly (if at all). Choose whole grains, oatmeal, nuts, fruits, vegetables, beans and lean proteins like sardines, salmon, turkey and chicken. Eat foods high in fiber. Limit red meat to once a week. Drink water and avoid sugary drinks. Avoid high fructose corn syrup, which is used to increase the shelf life of foods. Studies have shown that you don't feel satisfied (full) when you eat foods made with it. When you can, cook your meals so you can control what is put in them. When eating vegetables, raw is good. If you do cook them, don't overcook them or drown them in sauce.

If you use vitamins, they should be **supplements** not substitutes. Vitamins A, D, E and K are good as well as calcium.

She also recommended researching intermittent fasting and checking with your healthcare provider to see if it's a good choice for you. Intermittent fasting is known to stabilize blood pressure, blood sugar level and burn stored fat.

Eat the right foods, and they will send



instructions to your genes for good health. Eating the wrong foods, however, sends messages for disease.

3. Better sleep matters

Lack of sleep can cause you to gain weight, impact your immune system, make you anxious and increase your risk for heart disease. To facilitate sleep, Dr. Robertson recommends writing down your "to do" list for the next day before you go to bed. That way, you won't wake up in the middle of the night thinking about all you need to do.

4. Don't skip routine screenings

You need to know your health! There are routine screenings we need to keep up with. Doctors recommend mammograms once you turn 50. If you have an immediate family member who has had breast cancer, begin at their age 10 years prior to the diagnosis. Don't forget your monthly breast exam (all ages). Look for any changes, lumps, tenderness or discharge. Also check your armpits. Don't forget your colonoscopy. Early detection is key. Have your pap smear done (starting at age 21, every three years) on time until age 65. Even when you get older, you still need to get regular pelvic exams.

Dr. Robertson described sitting as the new smoking because being sedentary increases health risks.

Continued on page ten.

Women of the Bible—Mary and Martha: Knowing when to sit down

Sister La'Shandra Perkins

Names: *Mary and Martha*

Meanings: *Mary: Bitter, beloved, rebelliousness; Martha: The mistress or the lady.*

Their Character: *Martha was focused on what needed to be done in the natural, while Mary focused on the spiritual.*

Their Sorrow: *They were distraught when their brother, Lazarus, died.*

Their Triumph: *They were able to learn from Jesus firsthand and witness His power.*

Key Scriptures: *Luke 10:38-42*

We know the story of Mary and Martha, the beloved sisters of Lazarus. As I read the scriptures, I was able to put myself in Martha's shoes. As a woman who loves God and a mom who has a fulltime job, I understand Martha. What an opportunity to open her home to host Jesus and His disciples and let her hospitality show! It wasn't a planned visit, so she wasn't prepared. Being a southerner, I get this. We're brought up in hospitality. My grandmother always kept a pot of coffee on and something to serve to anyone who might drop by unannounced.

Martha wasn't prepared for guests. She knew that her house wasn't the way she wanted it to be. She didn't have enough food for everyone, but she had the resources to make it possible. Martha was so busy cooking, cleaning and preparing that she didn't realize she had the greatest preacher and teacher in her presence. I can relate. I get caught up with working, cooking, cleaning and doing homework with the kids that I, at times, forget to acknowledge Jesus with prayer and thanks in moments in my day. When frustrated, or at the end of the day, I want to always acknowledge Jesus, and I want to reflect on the lessons I could have learned throughout the day.

Martha got frustrated with her sister

because she had no help. She saw Mary sitting at the foot of Jesus and not focused on household tasks. In Luke 10:40 (NIV), Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Martha was smart and went to the highest authority in the room instead of saying something to Mary. Martha thought she would have Jesus on her side, but she was taught a valuable lesson in Luke 10:41-42 (NIV), "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Martha didn't know when to sit down and be in the presence of Jesus. She was concerned with worldly preparations instead of preparing herself for the Kingdom of God.

Let's look at it from Mary's point of view. Even though she never said a word, Mary knew there was a time and a place for everything. She could have worked together with her sister to clean and prepare for their guests quicker, but she chose

to sit at the feet of Jesus and catch every word as it was spoken from His lips. Mary took the opportunity that was given. She didn't know when she would have a chance to gain this teaching and knowledge again. Mary knew that there was no other Jesus, and she wanted her soul fed. I'm sure that Mary saw her sister working diligently, but she couldn't break away from the teaching. She wanted the inner connection to the Kingdom of God. Mary knew to sit down and gain insight from Jesus' wisdom.

The two sisters had different approaches to serving Jesus. Martha was worried about the natural, while Mary was determined to have a spiritual connection with Jesus. Both served Jesus out of their capabilities. Mary chose what was better by focusing on the presence of God. Martha chose to focus on the physical needs of others instead of bettering herself. She didn't know when to sit down and enjoy the gift that was in her presence.

Creative Expression

Sister Ursula Lovely
Why Pray?

To reach out and thank the Lord above.
To thank Him for the gifts of life and love.
To ask for a helping hand.
To help you and loved ones firmly stand.
To let God know that you know He is real.
To thank Him for the ability to feel.
In these days of doubt and fear,
Let God see that you know He is real.
Reach out and touch God's hand.
Make this a better place—pray, and we can.

Men of the Bible—Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah

Sister LaTonja Brown

Names: Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (also known as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego)

Meanings: Hananiah: The Lord is gracious, or the Lords shows grace; Mishael: Who is what God is, or who is like God; Azariah: The Lord has helped, or the Lord helps.

Their Character: All three were men of strong faith and discipline who were able to flourish in a foreign land under circumstances that were sometimes adverse.

Their Sorrow: They were taken from their homeland and exiled in Babylon.

Their Triumph: They were protected from a fiery furnace and were able to succeed in a foreign country.

Key Scriptures: Book of Daniel

Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (also known as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) were taken to Babylon like Daniel, who was featured a few issues ago. The four were from Judah's royal and noble families. Because of their good looks, health, strength and aptitude, they were part of a three-year training for courtiers taught by Ashpenaz. Their education was well-rounded. Besides receiving solid learning, they had access to the lush tables at the royal court. But, even in this new environment, they remained loyal to their faith. Instead of consuming the rich diet of the king's table, they ate a vegetarian diet. The four also didn't participate in other indulgences at the court.

The Bible says that God gave them an unusual aptitude for understanding. When presented to King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and

Azariah found favor with the king because of their wisdom and understanding. The king found them ten times more capable than others on matters that required wisdom and balanced judgement. They rose to prominence in the court and had the respect and admiration of the king. Daniel was made ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief over all wise men. At Daniel's request, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were appointed to oversee the affairs of the province of Babylon.

The four had a strong friendship and endured difficult times together. Through similar tests and hardships, their friendship was strengthened. Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah faced death together when they refused to worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had built. It is unclear of where Daniel was. The assumption is that he may have been traveling to another part of the province. When the king was informed of their refusal, he flew into a rage and had the three brought to him. Instead of conforming, they refused to bow down. To save face, the king ordered that they be bound and put in a fiery furnace and ordered that the furnace be heated seven times hotter

than normal. What happened next is well known. The king he saw them walking in the furnace with a fourth man with the appearance of a god (probably an angel sent to protect them).

The three emerged unbound and unharmed. It is a reminder that God can and will free us from our binds. Recognizing the power of their God, the king decreed that none could speak against the God of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and they were promoted to higher positions.

Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah remind us of the importance of real friendships and walking with people who share our convictions. They stood together in bondage, hardship, success, wealth and even the possibility of death while trusting in the God that they served. They trusted that, regardless of the outcome, they were in the hands of God.

The friends passed through trials and were delivered by a God who was with them in times of trouble. Despite what went on around them, they stayed true to their beliefs, trusted in God and served God despite any consequences. God was with them, and they stayed true to their purpose and call.

They stood together in bondage, hardship, success, wealth and even the possibility of death while trusting in the God that they served.

Prayer Requests:

- ♥ Pastor and Minister Jo Ann
- ♥ Sis. Rachel Jackson (in Botswana)
- ♥ National and local leaders
- ♥ Military and their families and veterans
- ♥ Youth, families, singles and marriages



Your Money Matters—Invest in yourself

Sister LaTonja Brown

It's important that we budget financial resources to invest in ourselves. Since we are mind, body and spirit, it's important that we allocate funds to all three areas.

Taking care of our mental health is crucial. This could include talking to a trained counselor, spending time with and sharing concerns with trusted friends, family or advisors or keeping a journal. One way to take a mental break is to save for a vacation to rejuvenate and relax. Enjoying time at a spa is also a good way to relax your body and mind. If going to a spa for a massage, body scrub, facial, etc. is out of your budget, have a spa day at home. Grocery Outlet often has moisturizing foot socks and hand gloves, and Target has reasonable face masks.

Investing in our physical health is vital. In this issue, we have articles from Minister Titus Robinson and Dr. Lillian Robertson on the subject. My philosophy on investing in my health is simple: I can pay now, or I can pay later. It is important to invest in my health to maintain my weight and control my vitals now, so I can be in a better position to be healthier as I get older. Investing in a personal trainer or nutritionist, even if only for a short period of time to develop healthy exercise and eating habits, is worth the expense.

Investing in quality foods is important so you can have a healthy

Since we are mind, body and soul, it's important that we allocate funds to all three areas.

diet (what you eat). Unfortunately, junk food is cheap. Eating well is more expensive, but this investment is critical. Eating right requires eating foods as close to as they are found in nature as possible. We should avoid eating processed foods as much as we can, which includes not overprocessing meals we make from scratch. For example, roasted Brussels sprouts are good for you. However, as we add salt, pepper, bacon and/or cheese, we begin altering it. Read food labels and make sure what you are eating is nutritious and has health benefits.

Making time to invest in your health with exercise is connected to what you eat in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Find different ways to move your body. It could be walking, swimming, jogging, dancing, weight training and stretching.

Another way to invest is to treat ourselves. In the show "Parks and Recreation," the characters Donna and Tom created an annual holiday they called "Treat yourself" (yourself). They treated themselves to massages, clothes, fine-leather goods, fragrances, etc. I believe we should treat ourselves within our budget. We can treat ourselves in different days.

Treat yourself by doing something you enjoy that doesn't break your bank. Trips to the hair salon/barber and nail salon are good ways to treat yourself as part of your monthly budget.

Investing in our future is important. This can be done through a class, reading educational books or attending workshops and seminars to learn new skills or hone current ones. Whether working or retired, business or personal, it is important to keep learning and attending networking events to meet and interact with those who have common interests. If you are still working, learning a new skill could lead to a promotion. Community colleges, continuing education programs and your local library are good resources.

Part of your self-investment includes planning for your retirement through your 401s, IRAs and other retirement accounts. Social security may not be enough to cover all of your retirement needs.

It is important that you invest in yourself spiritually. Take the time to meditate on God's Word to know God's promises for His children. Prayer is a way we can cast our cares to our Father.

Invest in relationships and activities that bring you joy. As we see in "Men of the Bible," there is a blessing in having the love and support of your community. We work hard, and, at the end of the day, we all want to be with people who love and edify us. Make time for your hobbies, to be creative and to partake in activities that bring you joy.

Fit for the Kingdom—Self-personal investment

Minister Titus Robinson

Whether you realize it or not, when it comes to your health, you're traveling down a road. Every choice you make regarding regular exercise (or not) and eating healthier (or not) dictates the path you are on. Whether you realize it or not, your body, at some point down the road, will let you know if you've traveled on a healthy road (or not). If your health journey has not been the way you pictured it or the road gets a little rough at times, a few changes and investments can change your life, path and journey.

I realize we're living in a different season with COVID-19 pandemic fallouts, but let's address exercise as it relates to your overall health. All you need to do is to get moving. You don't need a gym membership, expensive exercise equipment in your home or an expensive pair of shoes to do this. You just need to invest three to four days per week during your lunch time to walk a few blocks. Before you realize it, a few blocks will turn into a mile.

Walking is free, and it gets you outdoors. On a sidenote, being outdoors has its own health benefits, including improving mood, reducing blood pressure and boosting creativity. If you don't want to walk in the rain, walk inside your house and be sure to add some stairs to your steps. If walking outside, pay attention to your surroundings, especially when

crossing the street. Also be mindful of cracks and debris on the sidewalk and be careful when stepping off of curbs. If walking inside, make sure your path is clear. When you are talking on your phone, why not walk around your house or neighborhood. When things get back to normal, and we are able to interact more, invite your family and friends on walking dates instead of going out to eat.

Investing time toward a stretching routine is vital. As we age, our flexibility tends to decrease, which can lead to unwanted injuries, especially in our elderly community. A good 10 to 15 minutes of stretching can do wonders for the "hips, knees and legs." Be careful when stretching and do them correctly to prevent injury. You can reach out to your primary doctor for recommended stretches, and your doctor may be able to email you stretches with instructions on how to do them correctly. You may also want to seek out a physical therapist, especially if it is covered by your insurance. A therapist can work with you on stretching and show you how to do them correctly.

This will equip you with the knowledge to continue on your own in the future.

One investment that is very crucial is what we eat. The habit of eating what we want and when we want it is hard to

change. Like it or not, your body may be addicted to sugar and salt,

so changing your taste away from foods you love can be super difficult. When you are shopping, be sure to read labels to know the amount of sugar and salt per serving. Also look at what ingredients are in your foods. Do some research to learn what key words to avoid. Eating right can be more expensive, so consider it an investment in your future health.

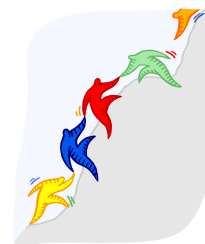


One of the best things I did while fighting salt and sugar addictions was investing time on an internet search on "sugar and salt cravings." I found that when I was craving sweets, I could eat fruits like apples. When I was craving chocolate, I could eat a handful of raw nuts like almonds or cashews. When I was craving bread or pasta, I could eat beans. In case you don't realize it, just looking into alternatives is a personal investment in your health, which leads to better digestion and a healthier lifestyle.

Until next time. Live a healthier life by making better choices. The investment will pay off in the end.

Whether you realize it or not, your body, at some point down the road, will let you know if you've traveled on a healthy road (or not).

Empowered by God to Empower Others



Special Guest Recap —Take care of yourself

Dr. Lillian Robertson

Don't skip your screenings and be sure to learn your test results. If you have not seen your results come in, follow up with your doctor! Participate with your doctor and don't make assumptions. Dr. Robertson admonished us to not let our doctors be more concerned about our health than we are, so be a partner with your doctor. You should be your biggest advocate and willing to make sacrifices for good health. It's important to know your vitals like blood pressure, weight, Body Mass Index (BMI), blood sugar and cholesterol.

Dr. Robertson also recommends getting flu shots, especially this year during the COVID-19 pandemic since the flu and COVID-19 have similarly symptoms.

Remember your body is your temple!

5. Reduce your stress

Stress wreaks havoc on us. 90% of illnesses are related to stress. In response to stress, our bodies react with the "fight or flight"

Even if something happened 15 years ago, our bodies still experience the same level of stress response when we think about it.

instinct. When we suffer trauma and harm, our bodies react and release stress hormones. If we are always stressed or anxious, our bodies respond to these stress hormones constantly, which can lead to high blood pressure, lowered immune system and weight gain. In addition, we sometimes will eat unhealthy foods to numb our feelings of stress, which causes other health issues.

Dr. Robertson recommends that we forgive and let go (release it). Even if something happened 15 years ago, our bodies still experience the same level of stress response when we think about it. We should practice deep breathing, mindfulness (being present in the moment), maintain a "God did it" gratitude journal and meditate on the Word of God (see Joshua 1:8 and Isaiah 26:3).

6. Be of service to others and maintain good relationships

Having and building connections is important. Dr. Robertson gave the example of when a baby is born. The baby is placed on its mother's chest for bonding, which allows the oxytocin



hormone to be released. This hormone enables us to connect and feel better. When we isolate, it impacts us in a negative way. Being connected helps with memory and lowers the risk of dementia.

In closing, she reminded us that we take care of our family and friends, but we often don't take care of or encourage ourselves. Self-care is important! We can better support one another when we are healthy. She reminded us of how a flight attendant instructs us to put our own mask on first, then we can help others. We must listen to our bodies. It's not enough to live long; we also must live well.

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