

Hidden Strengths

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Narissistic Abuse

The Things I Didn't Know: Life After Narissistic Abuse

*"Each day brings a new opportunity to grow through the experiences of what I have endured."
- Gabrielle*

Hi Gabrielle, it's been a while since our last interview in March of 2018. Hidden Strengths is checking on how you have been doing.

Since our last interview I have been managing life as it comes in a positive way. It seems as if everything I've worked so hard for in this healing process, has been tested in many ways. I am happy to say that I've become a stronger individual, by maintaining a healthy productive way of living after Narcissist Abuse. I would be sharing false information if I stated this has been an easy road. However, on today, I can stand and say that I made it by God's grace and mercy.

How are you doing emotionally?

Emotionally, I am in a very healthy place, solely because I took the necessary steps to gain my control back. I am more aware of what it requires to be in a healthy emotional state. There are moments where I think about all the things, I've endured. Then I stop and remind myself of what it took for me to get to where I am now. I embrace the fact that I will never let another individual treat me less than what I'm worth.

What have you learned about self, and the steps taken to gain your control back?

I now set boundaries and have no contact with the Narcissistic (Narc). I am empowering myself by researching and being informed on Narcissism. I am in spiritual counseling and also have a strong support system. I am back in control of me and how I view life. I am living based on what I want to do and think versus the allowing the Narcissist to control my mind and movements.

A Personal Story

What have you learned about self, as you reflect on what you have come through?

I am a survivor, I overcame what the devil thought was going to destroy me. I managed to take back my control and acknowledge my worth and love of self.

Was the healing process difficult?

My journey to healing had its ups and downs. But the golden nugget for me was understanding that I had to trust the process. Everything I experienced in this process was a necessary component in my healing journey. As a result, I have an amazing level confidence and a wealth of knowledge that I will continue to use through my healing. I also had to understand that healing is an ongoing process.

What were or are the factors in your healing process?

- A strong support system
- Focusing on self which included selfcare
- Maintaining boundaries
- Maintaining counseling sessions
- Prayer
- Remaining positive
- Removing negativity
- Research and networking with others that have been in similar situations.
- Sharing my story
- Understanding my worth

How do you see yourself now as to previously?

I am more confident in myself now. I'm also conscious of the measures people will go through to disrupt my peace. Most importantly, in this stage of healing, I've realized that I don't have to prove myself to any one.

Have you examined self to discover the reason for entering and staying in such a toxic relationship?

The main reasons I found to why I accepted being in a toxic relationship had a lot to do with not knowing my worth. Also, looking for love in others, without considering loving myself first, was another key component...listen.

Gabrielle, thank you so much for your transparency. What advice can you give to another (male or female), who is contemplating either leaving or staying with a person who is exhibiting a Narissistic Personality Disorder?

My advice would be to remove yourself immediately. The longer you remain involved with this type of person the harder it will be to leave. This process could be very challenging and will require one to have a strong will and desire to want to get out. It is also clear that Narcissists will go to great lengths to keep a hold on you. For you are their Supply, where the Narcissist feeds their extreme need for absolute attention, chaos, control, and manipulation.

Have your hidden strengths evolved since we last spoke in March 2018?

My strengths have both evolved and changed for the best. Each day brings about an additional level of strength. I am committed and striving to be the best me possible. I believe healing from a toxic relationship is an ongoing process.

Why is the healing from a toxic relationship an ongoing process? Why can't you just get over it?

Each day brings a new opportunity to grow through the experiences of what I have endured. I am strong enough to stand up to him. I have development boundaries that I am now enforcing. There is a process to healing you must work through. So, just getting over it takes time.

The Narcissist was never real. They were a character that was custom made to meet your specific needs.

"Consequently, the reason he became so perfect in my eyes was due to all the information I had given him. He was able to provide me with everything I wanted because he took the time to listen to what I said and morphed (switched) into just that."

-Gabrielle
Hidden Strengths March 2018 Newsletter

When the Narcissist exits your life, the persona is likewise abandoned and a new one is created to please the new target. Accepting this reality will help in your healing.

A Personal Story: Continued Page 2

Is there anything else you would like to add to your story not previously mentioned?

Yes, I want others to understand the importance of going no contact and the maintaining it. I believe that one thing survivors often take for granted, is the great extremes a Narcissist will go to, to regain communication with you.

FYI...

https://youtu.be/AXW_nHzA8v0

How to Overcome Cognitive Dissonance Due to Narcissism

https://youtu.be/rofb7_8Eiil

A Narcissist is a Professional Victim

Even now, my story is still being written. While going no contact with my ex – the Narc, things were going very well. Life seemed to be moving along without communication. After many conversations with my therapist, I truly knew I was solid on my journey of healing. Just when I thought I had seen every trick possible to gain my attention. Months had passed, and the Narc took things to another level, by contacting me via phone from an unknown number.

After realizing it was his voice on the other end, I can honestly say I was in shock. The conversation starting off with him apologizing for his wrongs, and then the unthinkable was confessed. He went on to share that he had gone to the doctor regarding pain he was having, and in turn he was referred to a specialist due to the findings. He indicated that the Doctor found an area of major concern.

At this point the door of communication was opened and again my emotions began to race. This conversation left me feeling like what am I supposed to do. I can honestly say the empathic part of me took over. Surprisingly, I didn't even think of all the danger, pain, and turmoil I was putting myself in yet again. At that moment, all I could think of was supporting him during this difficult time.

A Narcissist counts on your empathy and forgiveness to cause further abuse and chaos in your life. Thus, sometimes forgiveness and trust must run parallel to one another and should not intersect.

-Pastor Donna R. Williams

The sad part of this is, I was there as a friend to support him. However, he saw it as a full relationship! As the Narc began to treat it as such. I made it very clear to him what my purpose was. I was only there to support him during his health crisis. However, this is when reality set in, I was talking to a brick wall. I began to wonder, was this a mere attempt to get me back? Keep in mind, the Narc is very manipulative and a compulsive liar. I prayed constantly to the Lord, that if I was wrong please forgive me, but I think his health crisis may all be lie.

His calls increased, and the requests started with him asking me to please accompany him to his Doctor's appointment. I was hesitant to agree to any visits and I made sure that I never gave him all my attention. I allowed calls to go to voice mail and his messages remained unread. This was my way of letting him know that he did not have control of the situation. To no surprise this is when his old ways began to resurface, the mask was off again. It didn't stop there, in a span of only 2 months he used his family, trips, and a ring as enticements to convince me to take him back. I was still able to stand my ground and only communicate when I was ready.

As the Doctor's appointment approached, I had to decide what exit plan would I need and how I would handle the results of his alleged medical condition. My inner spirit was telling me it was an act. To get confirmation on my thoughts, I accompanied him to his appointment. As we entered the Doctor's office, I was somewhat torn, because of the possibilities of what if he really was gravely ill. Trying to process this, I looked at him to monitor his behavior. He was so off from the way he originally presented himself. He was now in a very cheerful upbeat mood, as if nothing was wrong. Mind you we were in a Doctor's office about to discuss his serious medical condition.

The wait was over and just as I thought, the Doctor questioned why he was referred to her. For the Narc's Cat Scan revealed no concerns. The Doctor indicated that there was no need for alarm and there was no sign of Cancer; and nothing to biopsy. My inner feeling was I knew it! After all his calls about being sick, having family contact me about his illness, informing me about going to emergency rooms, etc... It was just another manipulating trick for my attention and to have his way--control.

When we have a high level of compassion and empathy, it can and will be taken advantage of by toxic people. Boundaries help set limits on how much we give to others, especially those who want to use us for their own gain.

-ShannonThomas.com

I stopped him and said let's pray, thanking God for the positive report. He appeared to be so shocked at my reaction. At that moment my entire demeanor changed. Strangely, the Narc was somewhat mirroring what I was going through myself. At this point, I finally got it! WOW, just for a conversation and a trick to get me back and he's pretending to have Cancer, while I am going through my own Cancer scare, to include comforting a friend with her own Cancer diagnosis, which he knew about! Who does this! Answer: A Narcissist does!

One reason narcissists and sociopaths are so successful is because healthy people can't wrap their minds around the fact that people like this exist.

-It's Called Narcissistic Abuse

Well, now I know the lengths a Narc will go through in order to manipulate you. For he knew he did not have Cancer prior to contacting me...unbelievable! The thoughts all came rushing to my mind and I knew that this was all an act. I had fallen for his foolishness once again.

Turning on a dime, he immediately ask about spending time together and even went so far as to ask about taking a short vacation. The Narc presented all of this, as a way to celebrate his now positive report...LOL. However, I declined in a careful, non-emotional manner. In doing so this prompted another bout of his mask falling off.

As the days passed, he became angrier, and started belittling me. He continued to spill out crazy accusations, as if we were in some type of commitment. This is when I took the liberty to completely remove myself yet again with no possibility of ever returning, for any reason.

I know now I never have to prove to myself just how strong I am...I've gained so much confidence. My tolerance for messiness is null. I am so excited about this new me.

"My story of self is still unfolding. But I am wiser and stronger for the journey."

-Gabrielle

Pastor Donna R. Williams



"In its totality, God's love is absolute, complete, whole, and wholesome."

-Pastor Williams

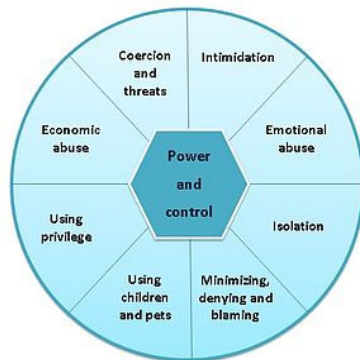
...ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

I shake my head at the unhealthy victim/abuser dynamics; victims hide in silence while their abusers are often patted on the back and are indifferent to the pain and destruction that they have caused. Consequently, this pain and destruction can last for decades. It can even birth generational curses.

Thus, don't allow yourself to be abused in anyone's place of employment, place of worship, home, educational setting, or any other place where you exist. Abuse is not of God...in any way, shape, or form.

Abuse is cruel, exploitive, manipulative, and violent.

However, God loved us so much that He sent his only ²Begotten Son, Jesus Christ to die on the cross for us. Jesus' death on the cross was God's ultimate demonstration of love toward His creations specifically you!! ...and you are going to allow someone to willfully take advantage of you or mistreat you?



You were not created in the image of God to be abused, used as a doormat, or taken advantage of. Nor, seen as object to be carelessly mishandled or mistreated. Furthermore, God's love is not a quid pro quo (favor for a favor) relationship. God does not require abuse, in order for you to demonstrate how much you love and are obedient towards Him.

The devil is lying. For God does not make excuses for abuse; Man does and it is abusive, criminal, manipulative and predatory. In its totality, God's love is absolute, complete, whole, and wholesome. God's love is not a commodity that can be purchased, haggled over, or sold to the highest sufferer....

Thus, you may not be going through a process of God. You may be being abused by Man. That said, I do believe in correction. However, correction should be akin to one tapping (not destroying) on the head of a nail, in order to guide it into the right direction for the Master's use.

Correction does not include debasing, deviously seeking and exploring. And watching others in order to take advantage. Consequently, and I do not care how it is repackaged, correction certainly does not include emotional, physical, sexual, or spiritual abuse!

Are there any solutions to this issue?

I suggest that people (acquaintances, friends, leaders, mentors, parents, and those in positions of authority) stop it! Stop the King of the Hill/ Crabs in a Barrel routine, where one attempts to destroy another's confidence, growth, or self esteem in order to maintain a sense of control and superiority and/or a status quo.

...ENOUGH IS ENOUGH A LONG TIME AGO!

The onus is on the perpetrators and their enablers.

We are living in 2019. If not now when? We are raising one generation after the next of abusers and traumatized victims within the Church, places of employment, and in the home. Like it or not our children are the next generation of advisors, executives, leaders (sacred & secular), worshippers, and parents. Children watch each generation before them. Thus, they will repeat behaviors observed.

Another solution would be to work through issues of anger (which include disingenuous kindness...the smiles that harbor ill-intent), backbiting, control, envy, jealousy, malice; past abuse, self-esteem, and just plain old evil and meanness. And yes, individuals know within themselves if they are evil thinking.

I say this, because if individuals were not unaware of their evil thinking they would not attempt to hide or disguise their wicked actions. For evil thinks the action through and wicked carries it out. I also give the same advice to those who turn a blind eye and allow abuse to continue. For you are ³complicit in the abuse.

Stop it! Destroy the works of the devil. I am reminded of Edward Burke, who was quoted as saying, "In order for evil to flourish all that is required is for good men [and women] to do nothing." For those considering going back to an abusive relationship, please don't! For the next time may be your last time. Emotionally, financially, physically, or spiritually; it could be the death of you!

Historically, abuse complaints especially by women have been systematically disregarded and overlooked within the Church, places of employment, and in the home. Those who spoke out were often overlooked and suffered the ramifications of being a whistle blower... The spirit of ⁴misogyny is real.

I am perplexed when women initiate abuse of other women, take part in abusing other women, or blame and shame women who have been victimized. I can only imagine that these women do not like or love themselves; a by-product of the spirit of misogyny.

How can you look into the face of another person, who resembles you and intentionally abuse them? (I ask the same question of my Brown brothers and sisters...that's another article). the cycle of generational pain and destruction must stop.

Native to the Galapagos Islands, Nazca boobies nest in huge crowded colonies, where adults frequently bite and peck their neighbors' chicks. A Wake Forest University-led study shows that the birds more frequently abused as chicks are more likely to engage in such bullying as adults. Researcher are examining the role of early exposure to avian stress hormones in the driving violent tendencies later in life.

Unleavened Bread (Galatians 5)

I've Come This Far by Faith in God

Often I pass by shelters and those who are struggling with the misfortune of homelessness. With just a moment of reflection I can quickly give God thanks for the many blessings I have that can easily be taken for granted.

I am grateful for my home, clothing, employment and the ability to operate with a sound mind and a reasonable portion of health and strength. I have the ability to see, talk, walk, write and many other blessings that we take for granted.

As Christians, we have so much to be grateful for. We would not have risen and soared to the heights we are now, without our Faith in God! Struggles and trials can and will challenge our faith. I have spoken to so many Saints of God who struggle with the issue of God's Grace being given to the worldly, who appear to have it all.

I believe that our weightiest challenge is dealing with what we "see". Consequently, sometimes it is our faith in what we "see" and not our faith in God, which causes us to question our struggles. It brings me back to what I previously mentioned, we have so much to be grateful for.

By looking at all that we have in our lives such as friends, family, places to sleep, food to eat, skills and abilities to provide for ourselves, we will realize that we indeed have come this far by our Faith in God and God's faith in us.

[God believes in you....ALWAYS remember that while sitting on the pinnacles of life that you did not choose God, but God chose you (Ephesians 1:1-6). Thus, you have a responsibility to see it through...don't give up!]

The life of Abraham in the Book of Genesis lays down the foundation of Faith in God. Abraham received many promises from God but Abraham had to wait. Abraham had to wait on God's promise of being the Father of Many Nations. Abraham had to wait on the promise of conceiving his biological son with his elderly wife Sarah.

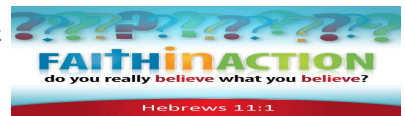
Sarah in her state of waiting laughed. She thought that giving birth at her age was so far from possible that she laughed at the promise of God! (Gen 18: 11-15). But I love the scriptures where it informs the reader that what is impossible with Man is possible with God (Mathew 19:20-26, Mark 10:20-27, Luke 18:20-27).

Wherever you want to go in life IT IS POSSIBLE with God! But, you can only get there through Faith in God through His Son Jesus Messiah. Yes, there is always a waiting period attached. But nevertheless in due season you shall reap if you faint not...

We have come this far not in our own strength but because of God's loving kindness, Grace and mercy. The Lord wants us to have even more....just hold on to your Faith in God. Keep walking in faith [not denial, nor foolishness]. Remember, how far you have come 1. By faith; 2. With your faith; and 3. Because of your faith.

LOOK UP towards the Hills from where your Help comes from. Speak your faith into your tomorrow. Your healing has come. Your blessings have come. Your heart's desires have come. Your promotion has come.

All the changes that you are patiently waiting for have come by faith in God and your faith in action...I made it, I made it, I made it by Faith! God, You believed in me.....that's why I made it!



-Elder Mary A. Mazon, Pastor
The Spirit of Truth Ministries

My Soul Still Says, "Yes"

Psalms 139:14 New King James Version (NKJV)

"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well."

Remember when everything about God excited you? Remember when you couldn't wait to share with others what He said to you or what He revealed to you? Remember when you weren't ashamed of God and jumped at the chance to pray with someone, even strangers? Remember when God answered every prayer, or at least it seemed like it?

I remember the day I gave my life to Christ. I couldn't wait for the Pastor to finish his sermon so I could walk down that aisle. I don't remember what he preached, but it seemed like he took forever. I wanted him to hurry up before I changed my mind. I was afraid, excited, and nervous; yet determined all at the same time.

Before I knew it, I was walking down the church's aisle with tears rolling down my face. Maybe I cried because I was tired of running or maybe I cried because I knew I would never be the same. Maybe I cried because I saw my friends crying, clapping, and giving God praise. I may not ever know why I cried that day, but I know my soul was saying, "yes".

Fast forward a few years to the place where you are no longer considered a "Babe in Christ". God answers your prayers, but seemingly not as fast. You are constantly being called upon to pray, read scripture, or volunteer for one ministry after the next. You are expected to conduct yourself as a "Saved, Sanctified, and Holy Ghost Filled" young adult (early twenties). But you don't know what to do with old habits or thought patterns.

You love God and you are deeply committed to Him. But you're trying to figure out how to live your life in relation to the Word you know. I knew how to be "Saved". But I hadn't figured out how to be "Single and Saved". I didn't know how to successfully deal with the unsettled emotions of past relationships and still love God at the same time.

In other words, I had given my heart to Jesus, but nothing else. I took my body to church every Wednesday and Sunday, but my soul was still attached to the world and wanting to participate in its pleasures. I was torn between two worlds and all the while my soul was saying, "Ummmm...I don't know about this God" (thank you for your transparency).

However, today I serve God with everything I have. I've learned that my victory is in GOD, not my circumstance. My souls says, "yes" regardless of the situation or what it looks like. My soul says, "yes" whether I win or lose. My soul says, "yes" when I don't want to say anything. My soul says, "yes" because it's not about me or how I feel (this is what maturity looks like).

My soul says, "yes" when everything around me is saying no. My soul says, "yes" when I want to give up. My soul says, "yes" because I know how awesome God is in me. After all o these years, I can remember when everything about God excited me and my soul still says, "yes".

-Sis. Michelle Allen



Let God Make You Over

Bend, But Don't Break

Everyone is bent towards something. Truth be told, life will have you bent out of shape. Your life may look like a wired clothes-hangers. The first thing that hits you, your life gets bent out of shape.

Imagine...holding a clothes-hanger and then one side of the hanger hits your life and bends you up. Something else hits you and the other side of the clothes-hanger also has you bent. But what happens when you are "hit" with something big...the unexpected; out of the blue bend?

You didn't see this coming...this has bent you over and torn you up and you can't straighten this out. You can't fix it because you are still dealing with the other two situations. You are trying to keep it going. You are even trying to cover-up it all up. But this is big and now your life is just like the clothes-hanger, bent and twisted, because of the unexpected.

Let God Straighten It Out!

<https://youtu.be/MdA-UZKmzFM>

You may be hit with anxiety, children acting up, depression, divorce, finances, home foreclosure, homelessness, loss of a loved ones, low self-esteem, ministry failures, or unanswered prayers. And the list goes on. But you must trust God because life will happens out of nowhere. Well, I'm here to encourage you to bend but don't break in this season.

Luke 13:10-17 talks about Jesus healing the woman that was bent over for 18 years. Can you imagine being bent over for 18 years and all you can do is look from the sides of your eyes and at the ground? This woman was bound with a demonic spirit of infirmity and couldn't lift herself up.

But this woman held onto her faith. She didn't give into her bent situation. This woman changed her mindset. She was determined to go to the Synagogue to hear a word from Jesus, even though it was on the Sabbath; meaning a day of rest.

You must be like this woman. Even in her bad condition, she was in church. This is a lesson for us today, even when we are in pain and we're struggling and suffering, there is no better place for us than being underneath the word of God.

Also, this woman had a listening ear. She heard the voice of Jesus ask her to come to Him and He laid his hands on her and told her that she was healed, and she straightened up. You see, this woman believed and trusted that she was healed through the power and touch of Jesus. How many believe that when Jesus touches, blind eyes can see, deaf ears can hear, and the lame can walk?

I want to encourage you today that whatever has you bent over, let Jesus straighten you out. Stop holding on to those bondages that have you bound. Give it over to Jesus. Jesus can grab hold of those things that were weighing you down. Jesus can take that thing that has its foot on you and put HIS foot on it. Everything that had this woman bound for 18 years was dismissed and replaced with the glory of God.

Praise Him for your victory! Thank God that Jesus is more powerful than the satan or any disease...Amen. So, bend but don't break during this season, allow God to straighten it out for you.

-Minister Bonnie B. Carr
Bonnie Carr Ministries, LLC
Waldorf, Maryland

Forgiveness and Trust

I have often told others that depression (and stress) is a luxury you cannot afford. Thus, you must get up and never give up because you have bills to pay, babies to raise, and a God to glorify. Consequently, I stand firm on this sentiment.

I have heard others mention that depression is anger turned inward. I believe this to be true. I have a slight bend, that believes some depression has its roots in unforgiveness towards others or even self. This may explain the long durations that individuals remain on prescribed medications to ease the debilitating affects of depression. Medication aids individuals in denial... not confronting and dealing with their pain. However, I am not making light of the situation. Nor, am I in the medical or physiological field. I understand that chemical imbalances do occur in the brain (flesh), in which antidepressants and other medical assistance may be needed.

Therefore, if you are in need of medication please continue to take your medication, as prescribed while standing firm on the promises of God concerning your emotional state (Isaiah 26:3). That said, I am firmly rooted in the Word of God. I believe that if you clear up the internal storms that rage in your mind and soul (will, intellect), you have taken the initial steps in conquering a spirit that is straight from the pit of Hell. Consequently, you must speak audibly to the spirit of depression, because unlike God, demonic spirits are not omniscience--all and ever knowing.

Demons cannot read your mind, nor hear you rebuke them in your mind. But, demons can see the Jesus in you and sense the shifting of the atmosphere as you call on the name of Jesus... "what have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me (Mark 5:7)." Demonic spirits have nerve...imploing (begging...pleading) Jesus not to torment them in the name of God! FYI...When I speak of "rebuke" I am referring to utilizing the Word of God against the influences of the evil entity because only God can actually rebuke...reprimand the devil (Jude 9:1).

Thus, do not fall back into listening to familiar spirits (demonic entities aware of your life journey, even from one **generation to the next. Depression can become a constant companion. Depression is a presence that wants your attention. However, for your sanity's sake, you MUST not entertain evil spirits! Ignore it! Stop dwelling on it, going over in your mind the muck that is and/or was done. As a plant grows larger in dirt than in water, so will you (your enemies are your foot stool). Beloved, in conclusion stand firm on this thought and also seek out any un-forgiveness in your heart that may open the door to demonic activity in your life (Matthew 18:21-35). Additionally, please remember that forgiveness has absolutely nothing to do with the perpetrator of your hurt or pain. But, has everything to do with you. Thus, forgive for your own sake.

That said, I caution individuals contemplating returning to an abusive or toxic relationship, regardless of its nature. Please remember that forgiveness has nothing to do with trust. For, you must forgive in order to heal, and position yourself in right standing with God to forgive you. However, understand that there will be persons who *may* not be trusted to refrain from their physical abuse or emotional toxicity that their presence in the relationship brings. Thus, there *may* be a need to forgive and walk away. Consequently, if forgiveness and trust went hand in hand at all times, Man would not be in this current Dispensation of Grace. For, Grace was ushered in because, although forgiven, through the shedding of animal blood (Law), God could not trust Man to keep the Law. Consequently, when Man stumbled on one point, Man was guilty of breaking them all (James 2:10). As a result, without the shedding of blood there was no remission...forgiveness of sin (Hebrews 9:22). Hence, the propitiation for Man's sin could no longer be found through the sacrificing of bulls, doves, or pigeons. Thus, Jesus (Grace) came to fulfill the Law that God could not trust Man to keep. -**Pastor Donna R. Williams**

Unleavened Bread (Galatians 5)



STILL

Every day that we are still alive is because there is still more for us to become, do, give, and receive. Even when it looks like nothing is looking good, all types of challenges are showing up, and there are situations for which we just have no answers. But know, trust, and believe God is still keeping us even now.

Psalms 46:10a tells us to be still and know that I am God. We do not have to try to come up with ways of escape or answers filtered through our flesh. Is it easy? No. But the Word tells us to know that God loves us and promised in Hebrews 13:5b, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Know that there is no situation or circumstance that is bigger than God. For with God nothing shall be impossible. We can celebrate the more that is still within us.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

I can only imagine that more time has been lost through depression and stress. However, stand still and encourage yourself. Tell yourself there is more strength within. More strength to help you just to be still.

So, know that indeed we have purpose and destiny so that God may be glorified upon the earth and we are blessed. Hallelujah! So, come on stay still before God Almighty, that we may experience still the more of Him.

It is not over until God says it is over. Even when it looks like nothing could come out of it, Romans 8:28 encourages you to "... know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

-Apostle Shirley Jones, Pastor
Rehoboth Family Life Center
Upper Marlboro, Maryland

Place Your Heart Where Your Mouth Is

Beloved, Romans 10:9-10 informs the reader that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him (Him being Jesus) from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes (internal faith) unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession (come into agreement with God that you are sinner in need of a Savior) is made unto Salvation.

Thus, what does your heart believe? Consequently, have you confessed with your mouth the Lord Jesus? But, *actually* believe in your heart that Jesus was just a good man who was filled with miraculous powers, which some questioned (John 9:1-34). Or, do you believe in your heart that Jesus Christ was just a conjurer, a man who could cast out demonic spirits (Luke 11:14-18)? Maybe, you believe that Jesus was just a teacher. After all, His parables were very instructional, and the Beatitudes were extremely insightful.

Or, even yet, maybe you believe that Jesus was just another prophet who walked amongst the pages of the Bible with all the other prophets of old (Luke 9:18-20)? Or, maybe you have no thoughts either way regarding Salvation and the divinity of Jesus Christ. Consequently, you are just going along with the "church" crowd because the church music moves you and you like spending time with those who "say" they are Christians, (those that are Christ-like). However, keep in mind, their hearts (internal belief) may be far from God (Matthew 15:1-16). Or, could it be that you are into the prestige of a certain well known edifice, its leadership, and members? Or, are you that person who secretly believes that you do not need or trust anyone, not even Jesus?

Or sadly, are you an Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, or Teacher of God's word? But, because of how you are living your life you have made God's word of no effect? Thus, you have found yourself disqualified to continue in the race (Philippians 3:12-16). Don't allow anyone to tell you otherwise, Salvation, meaning to be Saved, through Jesus Christ...deliverance from the penalty, power, and the presence of sin: past, present, and future is two fold: **Confession and Belief** by faith in Jesus Christ (the gospel of Jesus Christ, I Corinthians 15:1-4). Thus, you have to take the steps of confession and belief towards God, through His Son Jesus Christ to obtain Salvation (John 14:6). The true order of Salvation (Romans 10:10), "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, **and** it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved" (The Bible Knowledge Commentary (2000). Thus, place your heart where your mouth is.

<https://youtu.be/SeZfVVSIL4IU>

-Pastor Donna R. Williams





"Sometimes you have to pray and take a pill."

-Pastor Donna R. Williams

My Renewed Mind

Hello all, I am Sis. Price. You may remember me from my column of "A Renewed Mind" published few years ago. Just to refresh your memory, I am a Christian who was diagnosed with several mental disorders (Anxiety, Depression, and Schizoaffective Disorder).

Since diagnosed in 2010, after the birth of my first child, living with multiple mental disorders has been a great challenge. But I must say, as I have progressed through the years, I now have redefined what a Mental Disorder is versus a Mental Condition, as it relates to how I live and handle the disorders.

The "condition" may have caused some disruption over the years, especially when I was first diagnosed and unable to cope. But lately, it has transformed my mind in such a beautiful way. Because living with a mental condition as caused me to search for God more than ever. As I have been in the lows of lows, something within me wanted to grow closer to the Lord...my spirit.

I will like to share with you my testimony of living with a mental condition to encourage those who may also be suffering and living with mental disruptions. As I have stated before, I was diagnosed with 3 mental conditions in 2010, after the birth of my first child. Some may look at having a mental condition as a curse, but as the years have passed, I have seen the blessing in the disruption and the gift behind it.

A few months ago, I grew into a deep depression after resigning from my 9-5 job in pursuit of my dreams of running my own business. Before I resigned from my position, I prayed to God on the situation and felt a strong tug at my heart to do it. Little did I know, what I thought would bring me complete joy, drove me into depression, after becoming financially unstable.

I started finding myself "slipping". My mood changed. I was not motivated to work the business I loved because of the lack of financial success and being indoors for two months, while working from home. One day, to lift my spirits, I grabbed some breakfast, a blanket and my Bible. I went to a nearby park to partake in meditation, listen to gospel music, and Bible study.

Salvation consists of two parts:

1) Confession with our mouths, and 2) Belief within our hearts. We may be doing a lot of confessing. But what are we believing within our hearts?

I could only find peace by grounding myself in God. While studying my Bible, I decided to study on faith. But after reading Bible verses on faith, I was redirected to a scripture on Fasting. I instantly grew interested, for I had not Fasted before. Later, that evening I watched a YouTube sermon on Fasting, and the sermon mentioned the same scripture that days before I had just read.

Little did I know, the Holy Spirit was calling me to a Fast. Within that same week, the Holy Spirit mentioned Fasting to me two more times; four times total within the same week. I went to my Pastor and explained to her I believed the Holy Spirit was calling me into a Fast, but I didn't know where to start. In order to educate me, Pastor linked me to a Sister-in-Christ, who was very familiar with Fasting.

Despite the fact I had her contact information, I didn't make it a priority and did not act immediately. I believe due to my disobedience and not moving into the Fast, I experienced a two-week depression. I could not find reason to get out my bed, not even to take care of myself. I wasn't eating and barely was drinking for those two-weeks, which resulted in weight loss and dehydration.

Close to the end of the two-weeks, I came to realization that the depression was more than likely from not moving into the Fast, as the Holy Spirit directed me to (I am not saying the Holy Spirit sent the depressive spirit). In some ways, you can say, I was forced into the Fast. I wasn't eating or drinking. Once I realized this, I immediately contacted my Sister-In-Christ. She educated me on Fasting, as well as sent me literature on Fasting.

After praying on how long I should Fast and what type of Fast to do, the Holy Spirit led and called me into the 21 Day Daniel Fast. I must say it was the beginning of the most beautiful days of my life. God, through His Son Jesus Christ, ushered me into complete Salvation and Redemption. I say "complete" because I thought I was Saved, but to tell the truth, I was not.

On day four of the Fast, the Holy Spirit convicted me. I was able to now see every wrong I had done in my life. I could see my sins. I was being called to Confess (come into agreement with God concerning what He already knew) and Repent (turn away completely away from sin). It was as if God put a mirror in my face and I was able to truly see me! And what I saw... I wasn't as Saved as I thought I was.

At that moment, I knew what it meant to "carry your cross" because I felt as if God was going to cast me away from Him. I begged for His forgiveness and received Salvation. I thank God for His love and mercy and caring about me enough to Save me. Although, I was going to church, listening to gospel music, etc. I THOUGHT I was walking out a Christian lifestyle.

However, God knew I still needed a cleaning of my heart, mind, body, soul (essence of who I am) and spirit (the part of me which connects to God). As God continued to communicate with me through the Holy Spirit, He was slowly washing away my sins during that 21 days. On day 8, as I woke, I heard the Holy Spirit whisper to me "Reborn".

After my "rebirth", God continued to show me how to improve my life during the remaining 21 days. He gave me wisdom and knowledge on various things, solutions to some of my problems, including my mental conditions. God told me my anxiety was rooted in always being in a physical rush, basically He was telling me to slow it down. God brought items across my hands to purchase to help ease my anxiety, such as Christian Psalms Coloring Book. God told me it would teach me patience.

Prior to the Fasting, I was deeply searching for God. My mind and spirit were not at ease. But since I have been grounding myself more in God, coping with the mental conditions have been better. I cannot begin to share with you the total blessing of Fasting in one article. But I must say it was a blessing. And because of Fasting, I have been blessed with the continued presence of Holy Spirit after the completion on my Fast.

I'm not saying that every day is perfect; but with medication and constantly reaching out to God, my days are improving. Depression was a tool used to redeem me, and I thank God for it. God revealed to me that people who suffer with mental disruptions are sometimes people who He is trying to align with the Holy Spirit; as He did with me.

So, I want to encourage anyone who may be living with a mental condition or disruption that God maybe calling for you; as He did with me. God may be trying to get your attention. So, be encouraged. Seek comfort in God through His Son Jesus Christ. Stay blessed.

<https://www.nami.org/>

-Sis. Chaleka D. Price

But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascent into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above).

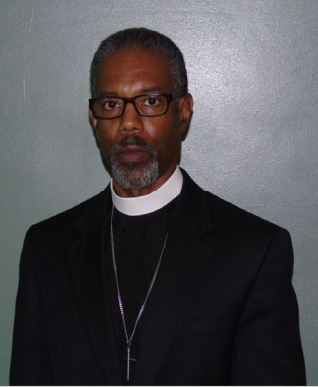
Or, "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):

that if you **confess** with your mouth the Lord Jesus **and believe** in your heart that God has raised Him [Jesus] from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, **and** with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:7-10 NKJV).

A Greater Hope



“The sun casts light upon the trees, and their branches lift as if to give God glory.”

-Rev. Edwards

Bent, But Not Broken

Everyday someone experiences heartache, misery, or pain due to some sort of unforeseen circumstances. Tragic moments always tend to catch us unaware. We can be happy and content one moment, only to have happiness snatch away at the blink of an eye.

No one is ever truly ready or prepared for their turn in the heartaches of life. However, no one is exempt from experiencing suffering that seem to come within a moment's notice. No one can certainly say they know when they will go through the turnstile of despair.

In fact, it may be your turn at this very moment, and you have reached your breaking point. What you are feeling and experiencing is real and maybe very devastating. However, I want you to know that you may be bent, but you are not broken.

Over the years there have been storms that have occurred across the region; torrential rain, coupled with gusty winds that caused a lot of destruction. As the ground became saturated, trees sometimes violently crashed as they were uprooted.

Limbs were broken due to mighty force of the winds. Yet there was always trees that would bend but would not break. These trees stood the test of time and weathered many storms. These trees were rooted into the deep rich soil and were able to cling on for their very lives.

As you have gone through the storms of life, you may have felt as though you were at the very point of breaking or becoming dislodged from your sanctuary; your sanity. The external forces of the storms were very traumatic and disruptive. However, Paul exhorts the church at Corinth that:

“We are pushed hard from all sides. But we are not beaten down. We are bewildered. But that doesn't make us lose hope. Others make us suffer. But God does not desert us. We are knocked down. But we are not knocked out (II Corinthians 4:8-9 4:8 NIRV).

The storms of life can cause stress, strain, and sorrow. They press upon you emotionally, physically, and spiritually on every side. The storms of life cause you to become confused and perplexed on how to eradicate whatever you are going through.

The storms of life can be from within your own family, circle of friends or acquaintances and even your place of employment. The storms of life have wounded and maybe even defeated you, as if you had been knocked down and trampled underfoot. But be encouraged.

During a heavy rain storms tree branches and leaves hang low from all the accumulated water. However, when the storms are over, the water begins to dissipate, and branches and leaves rise once more. And so, it will be when your storm is over.

Your burdens and troubles will too begin to dissipate. You will no longer be bent and confused by your struggles. For you will see, the storms of life are only temporary. The sun will shine again, because the Son (John 3:16) has never stopped shining on you.

When your storm is over, you will look back and give testimony that your storm only caused you to bend, but by the Grace of God, you did not break. God has already assured us the victory though Christ Jesus our risen Savior. Jesus is our shelter in the time of a storm.

Jesus is a very present help in the time of trouble. Jesus is our supplier of all we need. Can I share a little secret with you; even if you bend to the point of actually breaking, the Master can put you back together again. Hallelujah!

As you face whatever is weighing upon you and causing you to bend in despair. The Bible teaches, “The Lord is close to those whose hearts have been broken. He saves those whose spirits have been crushed (Psalm 34:18 NIRV).” God can restore you. God can deliver you. God will give you the strength in the bent places of your life.

<https://youtu.be/OKIPC1eRj74>

(Yes, it takes all of that emotionalism. Think not; you have not encountered your been-through breaking point.)

-Rev. Roland G. Edwards
S.G. Spottswood AME Zion Church
Landover, Maryland

Therefore, “turn your worries over to the Lord. He will keep you going. He will never let godly people be shaken” (Psalm 55:22 NIRV).

The fact that you may be in a bent situation, God will not leave you in that state. Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are tired and are carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28 NIRV).”

You may be bent, but not broken.



<https://youtu.be/ogRsyPpVRUc>

Crossroads: Where a Vital Decision Must be Made



Weathering the Storm

We greet you, Hidden Strengths Ministry writers, readers, and particularly those at the Cross Road of making Jesus, Savior and Lord of your life, with the matchless, magnificent, and marvelous name of Him who called us out of darkness into the marvelous Light, Jesus.

It is indeed a humbling experience to have such an opportunity to write unto you once again in hope that God Almighty, Supreme Ruler of Heaven and Earth, bless you with the blessing you stand in need of!!

In my deepest thoughts of my love for all, as you find yourselves struggling with the affairs of life, seek the mighty hand of God, who is able to bring you through. Be Persistent – Be Not Persuaded – Be Productive – Be always pressing toward your goals through Christ Jesus.

My thoughts for you at the cross road in your life, as storms of great proportion seem to have no end as they vehemently tear against the very fabric of your resistance. The great manifestation of divine scripture assures the Believer, that all things are working together for your good!

Storms come upon all people. Storms bring, chaos, confusion – conflict – character change, Storms diverts the direction you've chosen to go, diverts the dynamics that you have been accustomed to. Storms may leave behind financial floods, shattered thoughts, wavering ways, wrecked lives, and countless other effects.

Some storms are created by your life style, living beyond your means, relationships that are toxic, behavior unbecoming of having a moral compass, and living by perception without principles, OH Yes! You knowingly and unknowingly create storms.

However, there are predicted storms, with divine implications. These storms bring about the newness of compassion, newness of competence, newness of desires (motives), newness of direction, newness of heart, newness of mind, and newness of integrity.

God is very crucial and important. God is a Game Changer. Have you ever considered a storm as a way for God to produce the fabulous treasure He placed in you? God has created you in His image and after His likeness (Genesis 1:26). Imaging you own a top of the line vehicle. It's tailored made to all your liking. The vehicle is the cream of the crop, top notch with all the bling-bling, the best of everything.

A mind blowing, vehicle that everywhere you go people stand and notice and just can't stop talking about. You are on a whole other level. And all of sudden a storm breaks loose and discoloration begins to take place. Now the vehicle's beauty and performance begins to fade. The vehicle's design is has been compromised.

What Do You Do? Would you trust your most prize procession to a shade tree, miscellaneous paint companies, mechanic, or auto performance shop for restoration of the vehicle? What do you do, cry about, worry about, suffer in anger over the vehicle that means the world to you? What do you Do?

Weathering the Storm

For this top of the line vehicle is You. And God's love for that top of the line vehicle (you) will restore you back to His specifications in great-detail.

-Jeremiah 29:11: For I (God) know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, I thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

-Psalm 139:2: Thou knows my down-sitting and mine uprising thou understands my though afar off.

-Jeremiah 1:5: Before I (God) formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou came forth out of the womb.

Weathering the Storm

The Bible is filled with those who have weathered the storm. Hannah in the book of Samuel could not conceive a child – A storm in her life, she went to God daily and God brought her through her storm.

-King David was caught up in a web of deception, disaster, and discomfort - A storm. He prayed for forgiveness and God brought him through his storm, Psalm 51.

-Joseph was thrown in a hole and left for dead - A storm. God heard his cry and he became the 2nd in command in Egypt during a time of famine (Genesis 37, 39-48).

-Queen Esther faced with the annihilation of her people - A Storm. She prayed, fasted, consecrated herself unto the Lord God.

-The disciples while crossing the waters at Jesus command - A Storm. They cried out to Jesus, and He spoke Peace to their Storm (Matthew 14:22-33).

-Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls (Matthew 11:29).

-But we have this Treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power From God and not from us (II Corinthians 4:7).

As I close Weathering the Storm, let us pray... "Merciful and all wise eternal Father which art in Heaven. Hallowed be thy Name, God I Pray, that you forgive me of my sins. Help me OH! God through the storms which are raging in my life.

Help me find direction, discipline, and a deep desire to please You in all that I may do. Help me to know You even the more. OH! God know my storms give me the strength and an encouraged heart, to make it through. This I Pray in the name of Jesus. Amen"

<https://youtu.be/KioGWbuqRWM>

-Rev. Anthony T. Young, Pastor
Lee's Chapel Missionary Baptist Church
Maple Hill, N.C.

THE PAST IS WHERE YOU
learned the lesson
The FUTURE is where you
apply the lesson.

Don't GIVE UP

FABRIC IN TIME TRANSFORMING
by Tyrese Davis
Hidden Strengths Ministry Poet Laureate

Reasoning isn't everything
and sometimes reasons don't matter
Many Extremes exist and are available on scales
Polarization displayed through charts and graphs
Showing color gradients, negative and positive numbers
Even sometimes depictions of unlike things on one platform to convey a comparison and contrast

Expressing the thought that there is quiet and loud
Hot and a Cold
Mean and Nice
Moral and Immoral

The fact that there is a low means that a high exists
Some believe that within each is a teachable moment to ones self
I do believe this but with it is also a moment
that cultivates emotions and growth induced transition

Transition that is just that...
Transforming
Transforming the mind, behavior
New understanding
Sadness, Pain
Strength, Weakness

Within all this transformation
Are varying peaks
Teaching peaks
Peaks that convey stereotypes
Mis-drawn conclusions
Stigmatizing Misdiagnosis

Let your strength lead you
And it will lead you to teach
It will lead you to begin to life outside of yourself
And not where the pain lives

Relief lies in steps toward courage
Courage to open your mouth and release
Release from your throat and out from your lips
the moths that have hatched inside you
Eating at the woolen fabric of your organs
Creating nonexistent gaps in the yarn

Further relief is found after coughing up the remnants
The yarn
Unraveling all that you must
Latching on to the needle and starting anew
With Yarn that has already proven its strength
Why, with being eaten the way it was,
It could have died out completely
And fell completely apart...turned to dust
But yet it still remains.
Loose
Kinky
Tight
Unraveling
Strong
All at the same time

After wear and tear
Things need a good washing
Submergence
A soapy soak
Or just a soak
Time in water releases
better than a rug beaten

Sometimes soil sinks and
sometimes it floats to the top
The harsh truth is
Within the float
The dirt can and will clog drains
Forcing the Fabric and Dirt to exist
In the same water
The same tub

We clean what we can dry and make due with our best
Because life ain't only lived in the tub, or in the belly

Hidden Strengths Support Ministry, Inc.

Prayer Requests and Correspondence

Pastor Donna R. Williams
Hidden Strengths Support Ministry
P.O. Box 2052
Bowie, MD 20718-2052
(202) 372-7716

www.hiddenstrengthsministry.org

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P.O. Box 2052, Bowie MD 20718-2052

Hidden Strengths is seeking individuals to submit Testimony to the awesomeness of God. Please forward your testimony and contact information to the ministry's P.O. Box. **You may be selected and featured in our A Witness is Needed Column.** Hidden Strengths reserves the right to edit for clarity and space. No fee paid.

Ministry News and Information

S.G. Spottswood A.M.E Zion Church

Rev. Jonathan Counts, Pastor
419 Hill Road, Landover MD 20785
(301) 336-9315
9:00 am Sunday School
10:00 am Sunday Morning Worship
9:00 pm Wednesday Night Prayer Call
(712) 770-4160 Code 929037
7:00 pm Thursday Night Bible Study

The Spirit of Truth Ministries

Elder Mary A. Mazon, Pastor
(240) 381-0080

Rehoboth Family Life Center

Apostle Shirley Jones, Pastor
10:00 am Sunday Morning Worship
17900 Queen Anne Road
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774
(443) 306-1520

<http://www.shirleyjones.blogspot.com/>

Bonnie Carr Ministries, LLC

Minister Bonnie B. Carr
P.O. Box 1852
Waldorf, MD 20604
(301) 643-7751

<http://bonniecarrministries.com/>

THE GARBAGE TRUCK



One day I hopped in a taxi and we took off for the airport. We were driving in the right lane when suddenly a car jumped out of a parking space right in front of us. My taxi driver slammed on his brakes, skidded, and missed the other car by just inches!

The driver of the other car whipped his head around and started yelling at us. My taxi driver just smiled and waved at the guy. I mean, he was really friendly. So I asked, "Why did you just do that? This guy almost ruined your car and sent us to the hospital!" This is when my taxi driver taught me what I now call, 'The Law of the Garbage Truck'.

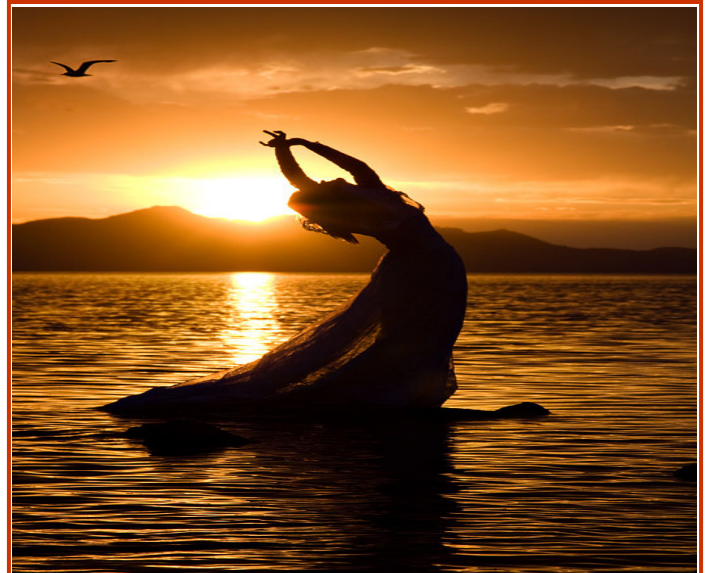
He explained that many people are like garbage trucks. They run around full of garbage: full of anger, full of attention seeking, full of the devil, full of fear, full of frustration, full of hate, full of insecurities, full of misery, full of pain, just full! As their garbage piles up they seek places to dump it and sometimes they will attempt to dump it on you.

Be conscious of the measures people will go through to disrupt your peace....misery loves company. However, continue to live your best life. Just wish them well and move on. But make sure not to take their garbage and spread it to other people, whether in your place of worship, home, or place of employment.

The bottom line is that successful people do not allow garbage trucks to take over their lives. Life [three score and ten; by measure of strength eighty] is too short to wake up in the morning with regret. Life is ten percent of what happens to you and ninety percent of how you respond. Thus, garbage will always be garbage. However, don't allow the "garbage" to steal your peace, continue to live your best life.

<https://youtu.be/7xBxlpLx4f8>

Author Unknown



"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord....Amen."

https://youtu.be/K_OiPd7d_A8

Hidden Strengths Support Ministry

¹**Generational Curse** - is a defilement, condition, issue etc. that is passed from one generation to the next. For example great-grandfather, father, son and son's son all served time in prison or physical abused women. Or, great-grandmother, mother, daughter and daughter's daughter all were alcoholics or gave birth out of wedlock. ²**Begotten** - Only one of His kind; uniquely God's Son...no other like Him who is all - inclusive in sharing God's nature. ³**Complicit** - Involved with others in an illegal activity or wrongdoing. ⁴**Misogyny** - Dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women.