

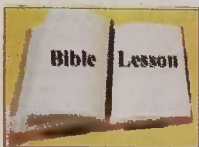
A wake up call from African American heart attack victims.



Religion

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2007

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The one you love is sick

My family originally came from western Kentucky. Not so long ago it was common for women there to marry at a young age. My grandmother was married at 14 and had three children by age 17. I was born when my mother was 19, and as a result I enjoyed the blessing of young grandparents.

My grandmother was a second mother to me. She figures large in almost every one of my childhood memories. She loved all of us dearly, and I cannot count the number of wonderful hours I spent in her home. Even now her house symbolizes peace and comfort and love to me.

I recently had the privilege of holding her hand while she died, someone who loved me unconditionally. As we stood by the hospital bed in her final days, I often wondered what Jesus would have done about her situation. I wondered why God had not healed her.

Since then I have come to see that such feelings reflected my own grief and selfish desires more than a real concern for my grandmother. In death she has now found a true life in God that I cannot yet comprehend. Do we maintain our trust in Jesus when death hits so close to home?

Lesson Background

John 1:19-12:50 has been called The Book of Signs within that great Gospel. The raising of Lazarus is one of the signs in the Gospel of John through which Jesus revealed himself to be the Son of God (compare John 2:11; 4:54). What we may call the "purpose statement" of John's Gospel stresses the importance of the signs: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30, 31).

While the earlier signs demonstrated Jesus' divine power, the resurrection of Lazarus revealed Jesus' authority over the grave. One can scarcely ignore a deed of this magnitude. The account is significant to the larger flow of John's Gospel in that it leads the chief priests and Pharisees to plot Jesus' death (11:45-53). Today's lesson is not about Lazarus' resurrection itself, but rather it is about the facts and beliefs that preceded it.

Death prevailing (John 11:17-22)

1. Where did Mary, Martha, and Lazarus live (v. 18)? Where was Jesus at the time that Lazarus died?

Verse 18 tells us that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived in Bethany, a village located about two miles southeast of Jerusalem. Jesus was currently

Please see WE MUST/6B



Gospel singer Adrien sings for a contract in last season's CATS contest.

Inspirational audio

Network hosts reality program to find next Christian music star

By Cheri F. Hodges

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The Inspiration Network is seeking entries for its Christian Artist Talent Search series.

CATS brings together 32 finalists from across the country to perform on national television for the opportunity to land a national recording contract with Infinity Music Distribution and Whiplash Records.

"We continue to be blown away by the extraordinary talent on display year after year on CATS," said Ron Shuping, executive vice president of programming,

The Inspiration Networks. "We're confident that in the sixth season, we will continue to see the best Christian talent the country has to offer. CATS gives them the perfect platform to showcase their gifts and talents."

Shuping said that entries from all categories of Christian music will be accepted. "Our primary objective is for CATS to represent the vast array of musical styles in Christian music. We invite submissions from all genres, including gospel, contemporary, southern gospel, rock, and rap/hip hop."

Please see INSPIRATION/6B

Rev. William Gray, gives farewell sermon

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHILADELPHIA—The Rev. William H. Gray III, a former congressman who later headed the United Negro College Fund, gave a farewell sermon at his family's church Sunday, saying change was needed for the church to grow.

"Everything must change," Gray told the congregation of Bright Hope Baptist Church. "Nothing can remain the same."

After leading the North Philadelphia church for nearly 35 years, Gray is turning over the reins to the

Rev. Kevin R. Johnson. Johnson promised the 2,500-member church that Gray would be back to preach.

Gray's father and grandfather led the black, inner-city congregation from the early 1900s through the 1960s, when visitors included Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders. It also has welcomed Nelson Mandela, Bishop Desmond Tutu and presidents Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush.

Gray succeeded his father in 1972, and remained pastor while

serving in Congress from 1979 to 1991. He later spent 12 years running the United Negro College Fund.

"I had the audacity to believe I could do anything I wanted to," Gray said.

He and his wife moved to their retirement home in Miami two years ago, but had to delay his leave-taking from Bright Hope when Gray's original intended successor resigned amid accusations that he had lied about his academic credentials.

W.D. MOHAMMED

Common bonds unite faiths

By Cheri F. Hodges

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Imam Warith Deen Mohammed remembers the taunts his mother endured in Chicago because she was dressed in traditional Islamic garb.

"She'd go (downtown) and search through department store catalogues for patterns because she made clothes," Mohammed said. "I remember being treated very coldly by most of the people in the public. She would just carry herself through the streets and I could see she was tense but defiant."

Mohammed is the son of Elijah Muhammad, who led the Nation of Islam to national prominence in the 1950s and '60s.

"As the years passed, I remember when things got better for us inside our community when we started to get material things and open our own businesses. This was right around the time when my father got out of prison," he said.

Muhammad had refused to be drafted into the U.S. military, not even signing a draft card and spent five years in prison.

"For the first six or seven years of my life as a boy, I never saw my father in the house," Mohammed said.

If that was hard, being a black Muslim was more difficult. Mohammed said he remembers people calling him and other Muslims "black Japs."

"Race relations were bad already but if you're a Muslim and identified yourself as different it was really bad," he said.

But things changed in the 1950s when Malcolm X joined the Nation of Islam. Mohammed said his father had a minister who would do

Please see IMAM/8B



Mohammed

CHURCH NEWS

The deadline for calendar items is noon on Fridays. Fax announcements to (704) 342-2160 or e-mail cheri.f.hodges@thecharlottepost.com. Please put "church news" in the subject line.

Ongoing

We Empower Women For Life At Women of The Harvest Bible Study Wednesdays at 6 p.m. at 6636 Suite L Hickory Grove Business Park.

Steele Creek AME Zion Church, located at

1500 Shopton Road, will have noon day Bible study from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

Join Scouting at Steele Creek AME Zion Church, 1500 Shopton Road, Charlotte, NC 28217. Boy Scout and Girl Scout troop meetings are held each Wednesday night at 6:30 p.m. Call (704) 523-6552 to register or to obtain additional information.

Grace Bible College, located at 1185 Little Road in Newton, will hold its winter Bible classes through February 12 beginning at

6:50 p.m. For more information, call (828) 464-7055.

New Life Outreach is seeking donations for its residential training center in Concord. The program's services are provided at no cost and help men with addiction problems. The residence is located at 2216 Kannapolis Highway. The home is in need of appliances, cooking utensils, linens, china, flatware, clothing and cash donations. Donations can be dropped off at Olive Branch Furniture,

located at 2603 S. Cannon Blvd. For more information call (704) 701-8783.

Restoration Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ has moved to 220 East Peterson St. off South Tryon Street. The Church's phone number is (704) 523-1441.

February 9

The Revival Fire Prophetic Crusade will be hosted through Feb. 10 at the Divine Revelation Church of God, 3230 Piper Lane. Ser-

Please see CAPPS/7B

