



The Christian Connection™



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A Quarterly Newsletter from Christian Resource Network, Inc.

SOARING COMMUNICATION FOR CHRIST

WHEN GOD SPEAKS

By: Joan M. Blake



Have you had a dream and can't understand it? God may be speaking to you. In these series of articles, I will be discussing the various ways that God spoke to his people and continues to speak to us today.

God speaks in many ways, including dreams, visions, audibly, through another, and through his word. In this article, I will be giving one example of how God spoke through dreams. The central point of these messages is that when God speaks he makes a promise that He will keep. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

God spoke to Joseph, the son of Jacob, by way of dreams, showing him that his brothers would serve him. When Joseph told his brothers the dreams, they became furious and vowed to take his life, but, Rueben, the elder brother, decided, instead of taking Joseph's life, they should simply throw him in a pit. The brothers listened to Judah and so they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelite traders who were on their way to Egypt and who in turn sold Joseph to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer (Genesis 37:5-36). During the course of time, Potiphar recognized the favor that God had given to Joseph and made Joseph his personal servant (Genesis 39:4). But Joseph endured trials and tests and was even thrown into prison by Potiphar whose wife lied about an affair she had with Joseph (Genesis 39:11-20).

But God was with Joseph, and, while in prison with the king's cupbearer and baker, Joseph interpreted their dreams. In three days, the cupbearer would be restored to his former job while the baker would be killed (Genesis 40:8-23). The cupbearer remembered Joseph when Pharaoh needed a dream interpreted—the manifestation of a time of abundance in Egypt followed by a period of famine. Joseph would become a high ranking administrator in Egypt, the person with the task of ensuring that enough food would be stored for the years of famine. God was with Joseph throughout his trials and testing; what God had spoken to him in a dream was destined to take place. Joseph's brothers went down to Egypt to purchase grain and bowed before Joseph.

We observe five main points as a result of Joseph's dream. First, Joseph's dream took time to mature. Second, God gave Joseph favor. He showed kindness toward him. Joseph was successful at every task and had the gift of interpreting dreams. Third, God was faithful. Joseph endured trials and tribulations but God was with him; God never left his side. God used the trials to teach Joseph to stand on His promises. What God had promised, he was able to perform (Romans 4:21). Fourth, God sent a message to Joseph's brothers that what

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The Christian Connection

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If you would like to become a member of Christian Resource Network, Inc., make contributions, advertise in *The Christian Connection Newsletter*, or be on our email list, please contact the editor or visit our website.

Email:

Jblake@Christianresourcenetwork.org

Mail

Christian Resource Network, Inc.
P.O.Box 190971
Boston MA 02119

Website

www.christianresourcenetwork.org

Telephone

617.282.6182

Editor

Joan M. Blake

Assistant Editor

Leah M Blake

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 they intended for evil, God used it for their good. All things work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28). Fifth, because God loved Joseph, nothing could separate Joseph from God's love, not even his suffering (Romans 8:38-39). Joseph acted with a heart of love and compassion toward his brothers although he was their victim.

Regardless of how you are feeling today, God's love meets your every need (Psalm 91:14).

In Christ,

Joan M. Blake
 Editor/Publisher

GET YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER

Excerpts of Liz Walker's message by: Joan M. Blake and Rev. Liz Walker



Reverend Liz Walker

On Saturday June 5, 2010, St Paul's AME church celebrated their women's day breakfast at the church located at 57 Bishop Allen Drive in Cambridge, Mass., 02139. The theme for the breakfast was dealing with "Domestic Violence."

As I entered the building I noticed the women's smiling faces and was touched by their friendliness and gentleness. One directed me to a vacant seat at a table, and although there were no brochures left, in a matter of two minutes, I received a brochure. Ephesians 6 was read with a sense of excitement and expectation. Women clapped and praised God and recited words that identified their need to have "faith, love, peace, obedience, wisdom, knowledge, patience, overcome the past, have joy, financial blessings, and a yearning for Christ." Clearly, women identified with their past, were aware that they needed to make changes in their lives and came to the breakfast with a sense of urgency and expectation.

The keynote speaker at the breakfast was award-winning television journalist and producer, Liz Walker.

To New Englanders she will always be known as Liz, after 32 years as a television news journalist, nearly 20 of those anchoring WBZ Television's evening newscasts in Boston. Currently working in the war-torn country of Sudan, Liz graduated from the Harvard Divinity School in 2005 and was ordained as an elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. She is co-founder of MY SISTERS' KEEPER, a Boston-based humanitarian group working to help families in Sudan. After she was introduced, Rev. Walker immediately reminded the cheering crowd that her extremely successful career as a journalist was only part of her journey. Twenty-two years ago she became pregnant with her son out of wedlock and because she was a public figure, she had to face tough public scrutiny and criticism that led her to a "private prayer closet" where she sought and found God.

Her message was taken from Mark 11: 15-17 and entitled: "Setting your house in order." Jesus was putting God's house in order when he drove out the merchants from the temple. They were operating unfairly by setting high prices for their goods and robbing the poor. "An advocate for the bruised and the oppressed," Jesus' showed by his action of "seizing his authority," that he was "righteously indignant about injustice in all its forms" explained Reverend Walker. She went on to preach that Jesus seized his authority because "the authority of the temple went against God's authority and created chaos. She equated Jesus' clearing out the temple to "a contemporary example of church members speaking out against domestic violence" with Jesus saying, "I am putting God's house in order." Reverend Walker noted that the church, particularly the black church has been slow in speaking out against violence in the home and in some cases, has been a haven for abusers.

God's house represents the church, your home, or wherever God's people reside. Citing statistics of women in the church who have stayed in abusive relationships longer than in secular relationships, Reverend Walker stated that something is wrong in the house if we can't speak about it.

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"Church leaders are using scriptures about 'authority' and 'submission' to hide behind the dark cloak of domestic violence." However, she insisted that when we "move into God's authority, love and mercy prevail and we can't separate love from justice."

Reverend Walker explained other forms of domestic violence, noting the gruesome atrocities that Sudanese women and children experienced when they lived in refugee camps. Rather than have their husbands killed, the women would choose to go out to obtain firewood or water and would be raped or tortured. Reverend Walker said "That violence is no different from domestic violence in families where women were physically, sexually, and emotionally abused."

According to Reverend Walker, "There is a need to examine God's love in light of His compassion and justice. When those values are not being expressed in a home or a church or any community, then we need to become like Jesus in the temple, 'righteously indignant!' We not only need to confront greedy merchants and money changers. We need to confront anybody who would rob others of dignity and respect ! All over the world, this is the moment to stand up and express righteous indignation."

HISTORICAL INSIGHTS ON REV. FRANCIS BALLA



Rev. Francis and Wilma Balla

I was born and brought up in a fourth generation Christian family in a coastal village in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. India is the land of millions of Hindu gods. Approximately 80% of all Indians are Hindus. Four generations ago my family, too, were Hindus. My great grand-father became a believer of Jesus through the efforts of some missionaries from the United Kingdom.

My parents raised us children with Christian values. I attended a church and read my bible regularly but never had a close relationship with Jesus. My grandmother earnestly prayed for my salvation. I thought I was a good Christian and that I would go to heaven because I did not act like my friends.

One day while I was reading a book about "The present and the near prophesied future," I was afraid of being left behind so I prayed and asked Jesus to come into my life. In an evangelistic meeting I responded to an altar call, made a firm decision to follow Jesus and felt an unusual joy. I felt like a new person and wanted my family and friends to know my new found joy. Immediately following my conversion, I stopped going to movies to prove to everyone that I was a different person. My desire to read God's word had increased. I read the Bible every day and spent time with God alone in prayer and worship.

After accepting the Lord as my Savior, I had a growing desire to live for him and to share the good news of our Lord Jesus to the ends of the earth. A student missionary movement called the Union of Evangelical Students of India disciplined me during my college days. During that time, my desire to travel to other countries to preach the good news kept growing. One day in 1982, in my dream, I saw myself preaching in a huge auditorium that was filled with people from all over the world. I woke up thinking that one day God would take me to different countries and give me an international preaching and teaching ministry.

I attended a student missionary conference in 1984. At that conference the preacher was sharing about God's heart for the lost. At the end of the sermon he challenged us with Luke 10:2 "the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." After hearing that powerful challenge, and upon my graduation, I re-dedicated my life to serve God full time.

The call of God for full time ministry was further confirmed in 1985 while I was doing a discipleship training School (DTS) with Youth with A Mission (YWAM). After my training, I joined the YWAM staff. In my early years in YWAM, I was blessed by several Godly leaders who took time to mentor and disciple me. During the past 20 years of ministry with Youth With A Mission, I have been involved in preaching, teaching, discipling young people, and challenging believers for world missions. I have also been involved in leadership responsibilities at various levels in the Mission. My wife, my three beautiful daughters, and I believe that God has called us as a family to serve Him: To love God and share the good news of our Lord Jesus through a life style of friendship Evangelism
To equip believers for works of service (cont'd on page 5)

(Francis Balla-continued from page 4)

To motivate the body of Christ toward world missions
To raise up prayer and promote unity in the body of Christ "
To initiate and participate in city reaching networks
We seek to do this through a preaching and teaching ministry,
extending hospitality, getting involved in intercession and
connecting with people for the extension of God's Kingdom.

During my ministry with Youth With A Mission, I have traveled to several places both nationally and internationally to teach in Discipleship training schools. I also spoke in many churches, conferences, and youth groups in and around our city. I believe, through my ministry, that a number of young people have received inner healing, have been built up in their faith, and were challenged for missions.

After serving God as missionaries with Youth With A Mission for twenty years, my wife and I sensed it was time to move on and pursue further theological education to equip us for future ministry. I was accepted at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary in Boston to pursue my Master of Divinity degree in Urban Ministry. God has enabled me to successfully complete my Divinity degree in 2008. As we sought the Lord's direction again for our future ministry, the Lord has graciously led us to Evangelical Congregational Church of Atlantic. Since August 2008 I have been serving as a senior pastor at this church.

BE PERFECT

Excerpts of Rev. Stan Johnson's message which he gave on Sunday June 27, 2010 at Rev. Francis Balla's Ordination. (By Joan M. Blake)



Reverend Stan and Mrs. Johnson

Sunday June 27, 2010 marked a memorable day in the life of Rev. Francis Balla, his immediate family, as well as the Evangelical Congregational Church of the Atlantic, of North Quincy, MA, where Rev. Francis Balla is the Senior Pastor.

The evening was one of praise and celebration. Praises rang out from the worship team and the Church members as they sang vigorously to God, validating, and supporting their Pastor on his important day. The Master of Ceremony was Bill Glover, Moderator for the Church. After the keynote address was given, several members of the Vicinage Council led by Reverend Jack Swanson, laid hands and prayed for Reverend Balla, read a statement, and affirmed his ordination.

Reverend Stan Johnson, Senior Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Quincy, gave the keynote address. His message, taken from Luke 15: 11-24, was entitled, "Be Perfect." In Jesus' command to his disciples to 'Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect,' Reverend Johnson drew us to the importance of "the character of this Father we are to imitate-and that character is greatly highlighted in the so-called Parable of the Prodigal Son," which according to Reverend Johnson could be termed, "The Parable of the Prodigal Father."

The perfect father, according to Reverend Johnson, "accedes to the wishes of His children, diligently waits and watches for the return of His son, celebrates His son's return, then freely and extravagantly gives." The prodigal father emulated our heavenly father's traits in entrusting the inheritance to his younger son. Although his son was guilty of wasting his inheritance, he eagerly awaited his return, gave him a ring and a robe, and celebrated his return with a party.

The Heavenly Father also "grants the wishes of others, anticipates the responses of others and delights in, and celebrates others" explained Reverend Johnson. He counseled Reverend Balla "not to be spineless without convictions" when faced with the "most insensitive and disrespectful demands," and to anticipate the response of others when he observes them making poor choices." Additionally, he challenged the church and friends of the Balla family to "anticipate their needs, and then eagerly, with dispatch, meet their needs." He continued, "Celebrate others, not necessarily for what they've done, but most especially, for who they are. This means that you celebrate who they are, what the Lord has done in their lives, and what He will continue to do in and through them."

The Servant's Prayer for Patience



Dr. Gide Démosthène (Registrar GCTS-CUME)

Lord God, grant me a crucifying patience,
a patience that shapes and leads my heart to love as you love;
serving and forgiving others even under the crucible of pain.

Grant me a crucifying patience to love,
the patience to care, to encourage, to bless, to rejoice with others;
seeking the welfare of all around me, even when it's not convenient.

Lord God, grant me the patience to bear my cross alone,
though sometimes you may allow others to help carry the load with
me;
for the sake of your name, your glory and your kingdom.

Grant me a crucifying patience to accept suffering,
the patience of dying daily on my own cross so that others may live;
as Jesus-Christ my King and my Savior modeled for me.

Lord God, grant me the patience to accept brokenness,
becoming a living sacrifice, and an acceptable offering of worship;
honoring your will and purpose for my life.

Grant me a crucifying patience to shepherd your flock,
pursuing your plan for my life and your plan for your Church;
for all your purpose for my life, O Lord, give me a crucifying pa-
tience.

Lord God, grant me the patience to wholly and faithfully serve you,
the patience to be Christlike in all matters of life and faith and charac-
ter;
until Christ is formed in me that I may be a true servant like the
Master.

Grant me a crucifying patience to flee all appearance of evil,
becoming holy, pure, righteous, faithful, and true so that my eyes may
see you;
for the sake of your name and eternal glory, O Lord, give me a
crucifying patience.

(April 24, 2010)

Called Out for a Particular Purpose

Excerpts of Dr. Rah's message at GCTS 34th Graduation Banquet

By J. Blake



Dr. Soong-Chan
Rah

On Saturday May 1, 2010, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, Center for Urban Ministerial Education, hosted their 34th Graduation Banquet at the Roxbury Center for the Performing Arts, located at 1029 Blue Hill Ave, Dorchester, MA. The Mistress of Ceremony was Cherry Gorton, Librarian. Teen Challenge prepared the dinner. Mt. Moriah Baptist Church of Brockton, Mass, led us in a beautiful worship of songs and hymns.

The evening began with a choral prayer where various students prayed in Kiswahili, Korean, French-Creole, Spanish, and English. Following the prayer, Dr. Alvin Padilla, Dean, introduced the keynote speaker.

The keynote speaker for the event was Dr. Soong-Chan Rah, Asst. Professor at North Park Theological Seminary, in Chicago, a renowned speaker and preacher. His message was motivating and compelling as he explained that we, as believers, have been called out "for a particular purpose." He explained that we are living in an "amazing time"-a time quoted in Jeremiah 1:9 where God states that "I have put my words into your mouth." This is a call for the church to be "revived and to release its prophetic voice of truth" as found in Scripture and not mimic "white western culture," which for the past one hundred years has dominated how and what people should think.

According to Dr. Soong-Chan Rah, "Scripture," and not "culture," defines how we should act or think. If we "have the truth of God," we will have a "heart for God" and will "speak the truth with love and show love and compassion for others" (Jeremiah 1:9). A person embracing this understanding is not afraid to be transparent before "God, family, congregation, and community" (Jeremiah 20:7-18). (Continued on page 7)

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Dr. Soong-Chan Rah charged the students to be "boldly prophetic" and not settle to be "honorary white" persons but to be what God has called them to be. "Go forth. Preach boldly and exegetically, live boldly in your communities, love boldly, seek the Shalom of the city, for the Savior Jesus has called you for such a time like this."

Following the keynote address, Dr. Hollinger, President of Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, addressed graduates telling them to grow in the love of God, stay faithful to the gospel and the word and to engage the world, taking the gospel-the good news to the world for the sake of the kingdom. Rev. Dr. Alvin Padilla thanked the staff and faculty, stating that it takes "whole teams to equip women and men." Cherry Gorton prayed and thanked churches for standing with CUME; Frank Tully recognized the Pierce Fellowship graduates; Students Ruth Gonzalez, Grace Wairimu and Marian Adams-Paugh gave testimonials; Michael Mercier, Marian Adams-Paugh and Matthew Charles O'Brien received the Phi Alpha Chi award, the Robert J. Lamont award and the Emmanuel Applied Research Award respectively.

Other faculty and staff from the Boston and South Hamilton Campuses included Dr. Gide Demosthene, Registrar, Rev. John Runyon, Rev. Naomi Wiltshire, Dr. Marilyn Weekes; Dr. Carlot Celestin and Dr. William Spencer and Dr. Aida Spencer. Staff and faculty presented diplomas to the respective candidates. The evening ended with a hymn and Dr. Frank James gave the benediction. Faculty, staff, and student are shown below.

Right: Dr Marilyn Weekes, Dr. William Spencer, Sunhee Nam, Student, and Dr. Aida Spencer.



Left: Grace Wairimu, student, middle, with Mr. David and Mrs. Janet Harkness, Directors of the Van Baay House in Cambridge, MA, run by Park Street Church as a ministry to international students and scholars.

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DESCRIPTION OF BOOK

This book is a moving story of Joan Blake's journey from her island home of Trinidad and Tobago to attend college and work in America. She expresses the joys and challenges of being a wife and mother, and shows by her personal testimonies that even when life deals out times of sorrow, we can find comfort, hope and purpose by resting in God.

The prayer, scripture, and reflection sections at the end of each chapter enables one to use the book for personal as well as group study.

Plan to Attend our Network Prayer/Breakfast November 5 & 6 2010

Be inspired as you listen to messages, prayer, and song.

Be open to God's leading. Be an encourager!
Share your testimony, pray for someone, help someone, and build partnerships. Be restored!
Be rejuvenated!

Be a part of a great network, a time of teaching, sharing, and discussion.

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