

Latest Issue

FACE TO FAITH

| When You're Hanging By A
Thread |

Whether it was the hypocrisy, prejudice, or just the ho-humness of rote religion, these three found themselves led back into the church, but were never the same again.

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BLACK FROM THE PAST
SISTER ROSETTA THARPE

FUTURECAST
UNANSWERED PRAYERS

ANNUAL FAITH EDITION

MESSAGE

FACE TO FAITH

*WHEN YOU'RE
HANGING BY
A THREAD*

90
YEARS OF
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— 90 YEARS OF —
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MAY/JUN 2024



WHAT THE BIBLE
SAYS ABOUT HAMAS

Faith that Lacks Biblical Authenticity

The rainbow flag, and Black Lives Matter sign, and cars with bumper stickers outside let me know this was a very liberal community of faith. That, and the members of a multi-generational, multi-racial choir with at least one trans person who sang their faces off on “The Stone That the Builder Rejected (became the cornerstone of a whole new world).”

This “Afternoon of Challenge and Hope” at the Immanuel Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut almost came to an abrupt halt when the special guest, The Reverend Dr. William Barber, II, declared pointedly, that he was, and is, a “theological conservative.”

Barber is the President and Senior Lecturer of the Repairers of the Breach, and Co-Chair of the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. He is also a past president of the North Carolina NAACP, and the founding director of, and Professor in, the Practice of Public Theology and Public Policy at Yale Divinity School. Those interests, and those affiliations, usually land one squarely in the land of liberals. Barber meant to challenge even more than the labels that day.

“Where the Bible speaks, we speak. Where the Bible is silent, we’re silent,” he said.

Nothing in our faith—active and socially conscious as it is—should operate outside of the preeminent Word of God, yet, it has become natural and normal for people of faith to roll into church without it, Barber charged.

The conservative practitioners on “the other side of the aisle,” who claim to operate upon Biblical principles got a swipe from the Bishop, too. If you take an office, and take an oath of office—raise one hand while placing the

other firmly on the Bible—you should at least know what's in it, he said.

The Missing Piece

Citing a 2019 Pew Research Center Study that “scraped” and analyzed close to 50,000 online sermons from more than 6,000 Christian churches, Barber noted a dearth of sermonic treatment regarding the poor—a topic of importance to Christ Himself. Even historically black Protestant Churches, while leading the array in sermon length, seemed to fall short in this area. (The Digital Pulpit: A Nationwide Analysis of Sermons Online)

The Pew study, admitted its analysts, wasn't representative in that it was a relatively small sample when compared to the number of churches in the U.S., and the churches were more urban and larger than most. Still, Barber correctly noted the tiny rate at which ministers of these churches even said the word “poor.” This critique of public policy and religion from the guy who founded the school of it, held a measure of credibility for me.

Neglect of the poor and the oppressed is one practice roundly condemned in Scripture. On an urban expedition to survey the plight of the homeless poor in Connecticut, Barber found himself trekking through the woods with a group of activists. Along a dirt path, in the shadow of a Christian church whose signage indicated “Gay People are Going to Hell”, he saw the “eerie” indications that children lived in the surrounding woods. Sure enough, God's children—the young and old, people of all races—were there, and living like animals amidst the brush.

Barber said his conservative Christian upbringing never taught that there was any distance between Jesus and justice. A people of the Scriptures can't overlook Isaiah 58's divine interrogatories: “Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the Lord?” (Isaiah 58:5, NLT)

A people who know the Scriptures, can't shrink from the messianic mission statement of Luke 4:18, 19: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come.”

Other non-biblical trends threaten to put human priorities and values ahead of the Bible's priorities. Prosperity gospel, it turns out, has an effect on the beloved community. Scholars have been evaluating its effect on the cohesiveness and effectual work of the black church community. Once powered through the biblical teachings of justice and mercy, “name it and claim it” goes to personal, and material gain instead. “Call It and Haul It,” Barber said, stemmed from the opportunism of a New Deal Era preacher who set out to “own” God's pulpits. That proved relatively easy-to-do when one buys off the congregation by preaching what members want to hear rather than the Word of

God, in all of its sometimes inconvenient truth. Christian Nationalism, Barber said, takes similar liberties. While it may be a political party's value system to vote against gays, for tax cuts, a women's right to choose, it doesn't follow to say that's the platform of Jesus.

"[W]hat doth the Lord . . . suggest?" Barber, asked, spoofing Micah 6:8. "Recommend? That's not the question. 'What does the Lord, require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'"



This
article is
part of our
2024
May/June
Issue
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What's the Message? Ellen G. White on the

Freedom Movement

Join us for another episode of "What's the Message?" where *Message* editor, Carmela Monk Crawford, interviews Pastor Dwain Esmond. They discuss Ellen G. White and what she meant for the movement that became the Seventh-day Adventist Church *and* the intersection of the church, politics and the freedom of the enslaved people in early American history.

Message editor speaks at Literature Evangelism Week

If you are in the Atlanta area Saturday, April 13th, please join the *Message* editor at Shiloh SDA church as she will be speaking for their Literature Evangelism Week. The theme for the event is "Sharing the Love of God through the printed pages".

When: Saturday April 13 at 11:00 am
Where: 810 Church Street, Smyrna, GA 30080
Website: <https://shilohsda.org/>

Then he said, "Go into the world. Go everywhere and announce the Message of God's good news to one and all."

What's the Message with Lulu Mupfumbu

Lulu Mupfumbu, Music Teacher and Director of the Takoma Academy Choir & Camerata talks with Carmela Monk-Crawford on Teaching Music, Culture, the World Choir Games and reaching for excellence as a small, predominately Black Seventh-day Adventist school in Takoma Academy. This is a wonder story of God blessing Takoma Academy in many ways.

WAYS to DONATE to the Takoma Academy Choir and Camerata:

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Up in Smoke: While it Seems the Whole World Smells Like Weed, Here's the Question to Be Asked

From the March April Edition of *Message*.

by Ricardo Whyte, M.D.

Albert Einstein once said "If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on it, I would use the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes."

Not only is it critical to make sure you ask the right questions, it's important to avoid the crippling mistake of falling victim to asking the wrong question.

It's concerning to watch the legalization of a substance that may be subjecting us to undue harm.

While heroin and cocaine are some of the most addictive and toxic substances to the human body their impact on culture is at least framed within their illegality. But the relaxing of attitudes and legalization of a substance expands its capacity to negatively affect, not just the users, but society in general.

Marijuana is responsible for the death of up to 430,000 people in the United states annually. Alcohol is responsible for the death of between 80 and 100,000 Americans annually. The number of deaths from cocaine use is

estimated at 24,500. And even that number represents the stark increase in deaths from cocaine use which was 6784 as recent as 2015 according to the National Institute of drug abuse.

So what are some of the phenomenon that we are exposing ourselves to as we expand the availability of marijuana?

It's not your parents weed

Marijuana—weed—refers the dried flowers, stems, leaves and seeds of the cannabis plant. With more than 100 compound or cannabinoid chemicals, including the tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) cannabis is more than a temporary whiff.

The mind altering THC was observed in the laboratory in the 1960s. When a research team in Israel injected THC into aggressive Rhesus monkeys they became calm and docile. (National Geographic Magazine. 2015 Jun;). Prior to the 1990s THC content found in cannabis was less than 2%, but the concentration doubled, and between 1995 and 2015 there's been a 212% increase in the THC content in the marijuana flower.

The other famous active compound in the marijuana plant is Cannabidiol also abbreviated CBD. CBD does not get you high.

In 2017 the most popular strain found in the dispensaries in Colorado had a range of THC content from 17 to 28% such as found in the popular strain named Girl Scout cookie. Unfortunately those plants producing high levels of THC are incapable of producing very much CBD, which is the protective component of the plant. For example the Girl Scout cookie strain has only 0.09 to 0.2% of CBD.

It's almost like a bait and switch in the debate is this notion that the THC content will be some small percentage or what baby boomers might have been accustomed to. This switch is that the percentage is actually much higher than the percentage that baby boomers encountered. The science is not clear as to what the long term or even short term effects of exposing the body to such high concentrations of THC will ultimately be.

It's the counterfeit

"All of war is deception," is the ancient axiom attributed to Sun Tzu in *The Art of War*.

What if marijuana and substances like it are actually counterfeit in that they cause us to succumb to deception? One of the clues that you're dealing

with a counterfeit is its failure to truly satisfy.

Have you ever had an itch especially right in the middle of your back that was just out of the reach of your hands? Try and try as you might, you practically dislocated your shoulders, arms or hands trying to get at that itch. Either you have another person es to scratch that itch, or you get a back scratcher and you do it yourself. Or, you might have been shimmying against the wall, or gyrating against some structure in a compromising way to get at the itch. If you ever get to it, for about three seconds you experience Nirvana, but nothing really satisfied.

Marijuana, as humble and innocuous as it may seem, seems to scratch the itch of human angst.

Many attempt to medicate what they think is anxiety by smoking or otherwise ingesting weed. However, we pause to recognize that the term "anxiety" has become a large catch-all. We utilize it to capture a broad range of emotions including excitement, thrill, fear, hypervigilance, desire, expectation and a host of other human experiences. Too often we treat our broadly defined anxiety as if it is the pathological anxiety that needs to be medicated. Instead, some of these human emotions deserve to be explored, and in some cases maybe even nurtured and savored.

Too often we treat our broadly defined anxiety as if it is the pathological anxiety that needs to be medicated. Instead, some of these human emotions deserve to be explored, and in some cases maybe even nurtured and savored.

Once the distinction is made, though, could it be we are medicating something that should actually be valued perhaps even cherished?

What if the emotion is attempting to alert us that something important is happening?

Instead we silence it. We fail to benefit from the information to which our bodies are trying to attune.

Marijuana is subjectively said to reduce anxiety at least in the short term. The problem is the anxiety, paranoia (Delusional fear that someone or something is out to get you), and worst case scenario psychosis (difficulty distinguishing between what is real and what is not real and experiencing phenomenon such as hallucinations, whether auditory, visual, or tactile) that

can result in the long term.

So you started consuming the substance in order to relax. And, it may facilitate that in the short term, but in the long term it's subjecting you to an increased risk of anxiety, paranoia, and psychosis. That does not seem like a reasonable or fair trade.

Here's one benefit of marijuana, a minimal benefit. Marijuana has been noted to help reverse appetite suppression. Most of us don't suffer that condition, suppressed appetite.

Ask the Right Question

- What are the assets that are helping me move towards freedom both financial and spiritual and otherwise and what are the liabilities that threaten to interfere with my progress towards financial spiritual social freedom.
- How do I become self-determining?
- And what is interfering with my ability to be self-determined?

Now that changes the discussion radically because I believe it becomes pretty clear that consuming marijuana especially tetrahydro cannabinoid is, without question, moving you away from financial freedom and spiritual freedom.

It's interesting that we have tetrahydrocannabinol receptors. What that means is we clearly produce a product for that receptor.

So the better question is, what states do I need to put my body in that will maximize the production of those tetrahydro cannabinoid-like substances? When the body produces it, it's not contaminated by irritants, and substances that are carcinogenic and deleterious and psychosis inducing. When the body produces it the positive effects are more pure. It's a dangerous thing to ask the wrong question and it is incredibly liberating to ask the right question.

It's the last thing you need right now

Many people who subscribe to various religious or faith groups are on high alert as a result of the existential turbulence that our world is experiencing. Their vigilance seems reasonable. As we observe the implications of the pandemic that resulted from a virus that shut the world down; or tense race relations; or concerns about global warming and the questionability of our earth to sustaining human existence in the future; or our inability to get resources within the reach of those who need it, it is clear that we are at the precipice of profound change.

The one thing is clear is that we need the brightest, most compassionate, and

the most vigilant minds vigorously committed to delivering their best to attack these global issues that literally threaten our existence. Is this really the time to put ourselves at risk of a motivational syndrome that marijuana users are often subjected to?

You are asking the wrong question

One chilling recurrence in my professional practice as a Section Chief over a Psychiatric Service, or as the Medical Director of a Chemical Dependency Unit, is the encounter with individuals who are now merely a shell of a human being. These individuals no longer value life. How can they while living at the basest levels imaginable? They're completely disconnected from family, disconnected from purpose, and genuinely resembling zombies. They did not envision this endpoint when they started their journey of drug use. Perhaps the question they were asking was "will this transport me to pleasure? Some relief?"

Perhaps the real question they might have asked themselves is could this be taking me somewhere I really don't want to go? The reality is this world is in desperate need of all of our best efforts. So this is no time to be high. I don't mean to be a buzzkill, but maybe I do. Time to look past the counterfeit, and seek Higher Ground!

DR. RICARDO J. WHYTE is an experienced medical director, skilled in healthcare consulting, case management, prevention, addiction medicine, and healthcare information technology (HIT). He is the founder of the Master Mind Institute that has developed the Thrive Membership that supports its members in establishing life balance and resilience fortification.

2024 March/April Issue

UP IN SMOKE

Weed Users Ask The Wrong
Questions

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BAD NEWS FROM THE DOCTOR?
HERE'S YOUR PLAN

Taking My Life into My Hands

By now you've heard of Dan Buettner's study, literature, and developing lifestyle and community brand, The Blue Zones. In a nutshell, Buettner explored geographical regions around the world that have higher populations of 90 and 100+ year-olds in their communities, and likely hold the secrets to longevity.

These communities spanned the globe and include Sardinia, Italy, Ikaria, Greece, Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica, Okinawa, Japan, and the only Blue Zone comprised of a diverse people defined by similar beliefs and practices, Loma Linda, California. There, most of the participants in this study happen to be Seventh-day Adventists. And, Adventists, typically are vegetarians, avoid alcohol, tobacco and drugs, and seriously check out of weekly stress during the seventh-day Sabbath.

Similarities in diet and lifestyle choices emerged from all these communities, and the data extracted show nine common denominators, or "choices" that can lead to longevity. The people in the Blue Zones are more likely to:

- move naturally
- have a sense of purpose
- downshift from stress
- adopt the 80% rule, which translates to eating less
- eat more plant foods, fewer animal products
- consume wine (except for Adventists, see page 11)
- belong to the same faith-based community
- prioritize family members, and keep aged loved ones close or in the home
- have the "right tribe" or social circles of supportive people around them

"To make it to age 100, you have to have won the genetic lottery," according to bluezone.com. "But most of us have the capacity to make it well into our early 90's and largely without chronic disease. As the Adventists demonstrate, the average person's life expectancy could increase by 10-12 years by adopting a Blue Zones lifestyle."

High rates of heart disease, diabetes and obesity among black people have me wondering where our Blue Zone is.* Wholistic medicine advocate, and

physician, Theodore Watkins of the Washington D.C. area Watkins Institute addresses the rates of black health and black co-morbidities. The same health benefits and life-extending results can be seen in our communities, said Watkins. He is currently studying and writing about Blue “Black” Zones, in particular.

Watkins cited several studies that examined and compared autopsies of Ugandans with African Americans. There is global attention and study underway to curb the sharp rise of cardio vascular, and non-communicable disease on the continent. Watkins points out that the studies indicated the rarity of heart disease among rural Ugandans. People there are living to be 80, 90, 100 years old and beyond,” said Watkins. People in the cities, however, have a different result and profile.

“When they eat and live like Americans, they die like Americans,” said Watkins.

You may eat like an American, and may not live in a Blue Zone and your stress is at 100 every day. You eat to capacity, and then some, and may consume your meat-heavy and sugar laden meals alone, skipping both church, and family meals. Your numbers are off the charts, and your health isn’t what it should be.

First, give yourself some grace, said Scott Stoll, a Nashville-based physician, lifestyle medicine expert, and a co-founder of the Plantrician Project.

The culture drives us into the fluffy arms of the foods we eat, beverages we consume, substances we hit. It doesn’t have to drive us right over the edge though.

In 1890, Stoll said, Americans ate five pounds of sugar, compared to the 140 pounds today.

Americans consumed four pounds of oil, compared with 74 pounds today.

Americans ate two pounds of cheese, versus 32 pounds today.

Americans went from consuming 0 sugary soft drinks to 55 gallons a piece, per year currently.

For most of us, 2/3rds of our calories are coming from ultra-processed, ultra-dense sources.

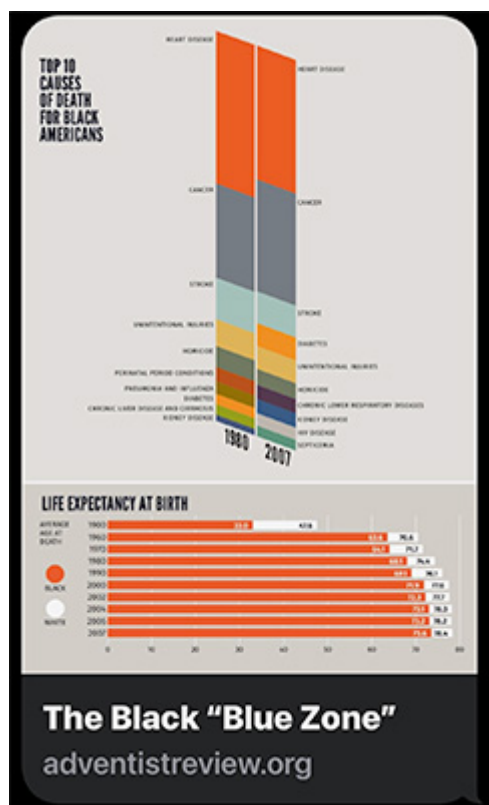
It’s not just you, your genetics, or your willpower. It’s bigger than that.

“Forgive yourself. Love yourself,” said Stoll. This is what we grew up doing. This is what our culture pushed, and what our families practiced. But then, to quote Maya Angelou, when we “know better, we do better” said Stoll.

Lifestyle starts with thinking and feeling, Watkins tells me. “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he,” (Proverbs 23:7, first part). And, “a merry heart doeth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones,” (Proverbs 17:22).

We have the information, thus, we have the capacity to live longer. To live better.

Check out this article to read about a Blue “Black” Zone in progress:



□ The Black “Blue Zone”



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Help Conference in Huntsville, Alabama Aims to Bring Healing Habits to Communities

Wellness

Wednesday: 1 in 10 Adults Struggle to Cope. Do You Know How to Help? By Nancy Virden

I cannot be the only one who talks to inanimate objects. Neither demanding from nor cajoling these apparently moody items has ever had an effect. Demanding that a living human who is struggling with a mood disorder snap out of it is like bargaining with a computer that just froze; it simply does not help. An interesting question to ask ourselves might be, am I concerned for this person, or trying to control her mood for my comfort?

Jared is a young police officer suffering from severe depression. He is suicidal and does not consider himself worthy of being a dad to his little boy. Naturally, his boss took Jared's gun. A sense of worthlessness is often overwhelming during episodes of depression. Jared's wife, Viv, in a misguided attempt at returning her household to normality, scolds him and tells him he is failing his family.

While it is reasonable to wish life were easier or to want what we believe is best for a loved one, Viv unknowingly crosses the line from concern into an attempt at controlling Jared's mood disorder. She needs her child's father fully present and involved. Her life has become harder due to his illness, so she presses more to ease her discomfort than to offer what Jared needs in his healing process.

In the online health library of the Cleveland Clinic, the medically reviewed report (August 4, 2022), Mood disorders: what they are, symptoms & treatment (clevelandclinic.org), classifies depression and bipolar disorder with their subsets as the main causes of mood extremes. An average 7% of U.S. adults are

diagnosed with depression and 2.8% with bipolar disorder each year. That makes approximately 1 in 10 adults who are likely struggling to cope.

According to the annual National Survey on Drug Use and Health by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([samhsa.gov 2022-nsduh-nnr.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/2022-nsduh-nnr.pdf); pgs.39-60), of American adults in 2022 specifically, 15 million suffered a major depressive episode with severe impairment. Like Jared, these people could not work or had low productivity on their jobs and at home due to loss of energy, focus, and motivation. This type of disruption is why mood disorders are one of the top ten disabilities worldwide. With a full quarter of workers contending with any mental disorder in any given year, employers are learning to integrate mental health policies. Potentially millions of American households too must navigate this slick and scary trail of support and recovery.

Pressure, such as the kind from Viv, is a primary reason that only about half of those with any mental health issue receive formal care. No one can change another person, and most of us do not like it when someone tries to change us. If concern becomes a grab at control, the one with the mental health challenge may withdraw, fearful of criticism, a blast of to-dos, or simply not being heard.

What are Viv's alternatives? First, she needs someone with insight to help her see the bigger picture. People with lived experience are everywhere – online, in mental health advocacy organizations, and in the church. Secondly, instead of reacting in fear, she can lean on her support system. Thirdly, Viv can gain ideas about what to say by reading suggestions from knowledgeable sources such as The National Association for Mental Illness (NAMI.org.).

Massachusetts author and family therapist Terry Real, *is quoted by* Editor at Large of *Psychology Today*, Hara Marano, in her November 2023 *article*, "How to Ask for (and Get) What You Need in a Relationship." On offering healthy support, Real says, "First, start with empathy and compassion, then ask if they want problem-solving. Turning an upsetting incident into a teachable moment is generally a bad idea."

Luke 10:25-37 records Jesus' story of a man who was beaten and left for dead by robbers. Another man passed by who was of a ethnicity and culture thought hostile to that of the robbery victim. Instead of behaving hatefully, he took care of the injured man's basic needs and placed him in a facility where he could be safe while he healed.

Without treatment, mood disorders tend to become more frequent and extreme. A valuable lesson to remember is that people are not to be handled, they are to be accepted. Concern does not reprimand or manipulate. It listens and offers insightful service, encourages professional care when needed, and waits for healing to take place. Following Jesus' lived example, concern is loving, patient, and kind.

