

# Zion's Call

City of Zion Church: "A Higher Place of Praise"

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## PASTOR'S CORNER

**G**reetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! As you settle down to read this article, may I ask how your TRANSITION



is going? You may ask, 'What transition are you talking about?' I'm not referring to the common life changes that unbelievers and believers encounter, such as aging or enduring the day-to-day grind of life. I'm talking about the

transition that all believers go through ... the different life assignments God has ordered for His children along our Christian journey.

At the City of Zion Church we just completed teaching a series of messages on "Running the Race." In this series we discovered that God has a "race marked out for us," (Hebrews 12:1). Hebrews 11 shows us that this race involves all aspects of the believer's life, including family, career, finances and ministry.

In Hebrews 11:8, we are reminded of one of the transitions of Abraham's life, when God commanded him to leave his home and family to go to a place he had never seen or been to before. According to Genesis 12:1, God told Abraham to "go to the land I will show you." This event represents a major transition in Abraham's life. It's important to note here that it was God controlling Abraham's transition. It was His idea and His plan. This is a great lesson for us. Life's transitions can be received and accomplished with greater success if we allow God to "direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6).

Another critical fact that emerged from this series of lessons is that FAITH is critical for successfully navigating life's various transitions. Transition can be a frightening endeavor. Fear of the unknown can immobilize a timid person. Anxiety about what lies around the bend can keep one from moving toward that corner. But faith — "being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1) — gives you the DIVINE power to move ahead toward what cannot be seen with the

natural eye. Faith gives you access to the divine plan or vision. We see Abraham's faith at work in Hebrews 11, when he is described as "looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

At the time this edition of Zion's Call is being published, the City of Zion Church is prayerfully going through the process of negotiating and acquiring our own property to house our ministries here in Laurel, Md. We have truly been experiencing our own season of TRANSITION, preparing to leave what has become familiar and comfortable to us — the Holiday Inn where we've been worshipping for more than two years.

We leave what is familiar to possess that which is unfamiliar and, it may require that we expand our boundaries. This act, by its very nature, is what we mean by "walking by faith." Faith is costly and demands that you explore the unknown or the "things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). The benefits are quite profitable, for faith gives you access to great "rewards" (Hebrews 11:6) or the "things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1).

If Abraham had remained with his family and in his country, and had not made his transition by faith, he would never have experienced the tremendous growth and accomplishments described in Genesis. Ultimately, by faith, Abraham became the father of a "great nation" and a blessing to "all people on earth" (Genesis 12:1-3).

What area of your life does God want to expand? If you sincerely ask Him to show it to you, He will (Jeremiah 29:11-13). What transition needs to occur in your life so that you are walking in God's perfect will? If you sincerely ask Him to help you, He will (1 John 5:14-15).

Again, how is your transition coming along? I'm inviting you to come along with us at the City of Zion Church as we "walk by faith."

Be Encouraged,  
Pastor Gregory O. Strong



## FAMILY REUNIONS

### Connecting With Your Extended Family Can Have an Eternal Impact

This is the time of year when families all over the world celebrate getting together and enjoying each others' company; eating a good meal, enjoying good music and for some, remembering the roots of being grounded in the Lord by our parents, grandparents and many generations before us.

This year, both of my family reunions were held in June and both were held in Rocky Mount, N.C. The first reunion was the Allen-Smith Reunion from my mother's side of the family, held from June 16-18. There was an opening banquet with good food and a formal program during which we celebrated accomplishments such as graduations, birthdays and other life milestones. It is our tradition to have a candlelight service for all family members that are now deceased. Some one lights a candle for each name called, and then we have a moment of silence. Our theme this year was "Together We Stand, Loving One Another." The main colors were lavender and white, and we had special T shirts.

Flooding required that we move our family picnic to another location. We had a great time, nonetheless, and one of the most memorable moments was our staging of the "Carolina Idol," where family members were supposed to prepare musical acts in the Motown tradition. My group — "Diva and the Supremettes" — won first prize. (Never mind that we were the only act!)

My other family reunion was the Battle Reunion, held from June 22-24. We set the tone for the event with a heart-warming "meet and greet," upon



arriving. The next day featured a bus tour of the African American Cultural Complex (currently housed in a family home on a few acres); and of Shaw University, where one of our descendants, Dr. Thomas Oscar Fuller, was honored as an historic graduate. Dr. Fuller was a clergyman, educator (three degrees, including a master of arts in education and doctor of divinity), and a politician. Not all members made it to the Shaw University part of the tour ... our bus broke down a few miles from the University. But the devil is a liar, and we had family representatives at the university to participate in a press conference and tour.

Three of the family's many pastors helped us close this year's Battle Reunion with a rousing worship service. I led praise and worship, for the first time in our family reunion. It was rewarding and it gave me much appreciation for the talents of our Sister Davina Cook, here at City of Zion. My cousin, Pastor Cornelius Battle, delivered a powerful message from God on "What's in a Name."

According to 1 Timothy 5:4b, "... these (children or grandchildren) should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is **pleasing to God.**" I want to please God by caring for my family — my church family, biological family and work family — the people whom God has placed in my life.

— *Sister Detra Battle*



### Why Kids Need Family Reunions

Concentrated time with those with whom you share a common past can inspire your family to think about the memories you want to leave behind. So, before you dismiss the idea as just one more commitment in a jam-packed summer, consider these four reasons to get the gang together.

#### 1. Kids Can Connect to Something Bigger

Most of us live at least a short distance from our extended families. That can create a sense of rootlessness in our lives, not to mention the lives of our children. Even if your reunion involves only your parents, siblings, and their families, such a gathering can create bonds and memories that will help your children feel connected to something beyond your family unit. It will give them more opportunities to receive the kind of love and care that only family can offer. It will help them discover more about who they are and where they came from and give them a sense of the depth of the beliefs you are working to instill in them.

#### 2. It Will Be More Fun Than You Think

Even the most well-intentioned events can fall flat if you're not careful to avoid two landmines that can sabotage a reunion. The first is a lack of meaningful ways for teenagers and younger children to connect with older people. If the kids

aren't happy, nobody is going to be happy. The second is unrealistic expectations. Even the most close-knit families can unravel after a few days of too much fun and not enough sleep. We set ourselves up for a real let down if we forget who will be at the reunion (complete with all their literal and figurative baggage). As you plan your reunion, make space in the schedule for people to get away from one another if they wish.

#### 3. Families Are Built on Memories

The primary driving force behind all reunions is our ability to remember the past. This remembrance is the basis of our stories—personal stories, family stories, and cultural stories (myths). Family reunions are nothing more than a vehicle for telling the family story. Knowing that family story gives children something our generation may take for granted. Because so many of us grew up with grandparents nearby, we had the benefit of hearing their stories of life during the Depression or the sacrifices they had to make during wartime. Those stories enriched us in ways we may not even recognize. Yet our children, so many of whom see their grandparents only a week or two each year, miss out on a sense of belonging to the history of this country, not to mention the history of our faith.

#### 4. You'll Build a Legacy of Faith

For Christian families, the story to be passed

on involves more than just funny memories of weird Uncle Larry. Christian parents and grandparents have an obligation to bequeath to the next generations an understanding of what it means to be a child of God, as well as a child of a given family unit. Beginning in Old Testament times, the Lord commanded families to share stories of their history and God's faithfulness.

Imagine the impact it would have on your children to hear about their grandparents' struggles to hold on to their faith in times of trouble. If you are the only Christians in the group, imagine the impact it could have on the rest of the crew to see your family living out your faith in this intimate setting. As families gather together, 10-year-old kids who love Jesus can warm the hearts of agnostic grandparents by spontaneously singing "Our God is an Awesome God" or innocently asking an unbelieving uncle who he is most looking forward to seeing in heaven. A great-uncle who has walked with Jesus for 60 years can "once upon a time" his way into the inquisitive minds of teenagers who've never been to church. And best of all, when Christian families come together to testify to the faithfulness of God, there is a sneak peak of what awaits them at the ultimate family reunion in heaven!

— Excerpted from *Christian Parenting Today*, Summer 2002

## GLORIFYING GOD DURING YOUR TRANSITION

**T**ransition is all around us at the City of Zion church. At the close of Bible Study each week, as Disciples offer their testimonies, it amazes me to hear the changes God has made in their lives. Similarly, transition is observed in the prayer requests made each Wednesday.

In our human nature, we tend to characterize a transition as 'good' or 'bad,' depending on how convenient the change is. Prayer requests are often defined by the specific outcome we wish to receive, instead of the Lord's desire for our lives. There is a direct correlation between prayer requests and testimonies in that, a prayer may not get answered the way we thought it would, but the outcome always become a testimony: "God worked it out. He didn't work it out the way I requested or expected, but He worked it out."

Nonetheless, I wonder why we do not declare the request to be a testimony at the onset. It may be that we forget the biggest and most rewarding transition that we have made in our lives: the transition from the old creature to the new. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17.

We tend to forget that when we honor this commitment, "we are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." 2 Corinthians 5:20 (a). If we remind ourselves of this daily, the transitions we face would be declared positive just by our obedience alone. It is through our utmost obedience that we are equipped to face life's changes without fear.

The transition from the old creature to the new is not an easy one. However, it is through our discipleship that we learn to submit and develop the strength to endure our changes and challenges. Ministry is one of the most major complements to our discipleship. City of Zion has at least 18 ministries, and each

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*"... we tend to characterize a transition as 'good' or 'bad,' depending on how convenient the change is."*

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Disciple is encouraged to participate in at least one. It is through this participation that we practice our obedience and develop a servant attitude; and it is that servant attitude that glorifies God. He, in turn, blesses us.

I have experienced the importance of serving in ministry first hand, and it has sustained my discipleship. I will speak particularly of my experience in the COZ's anointed Dance Ministry, under the leadership of Sister Elsie Privott.

Being a part of the Dance Ministry has been such a fulfilling experience ... one that I did not expect. When I dance I feel I am giving my highest praise, I am worshipping to the fullest of my ability. It consumes me, because I am worshipping with everything I have. I feel like David, not only when I dance, but in other areas of my life. Like David, I know I will be the person God has destined me to be, regardless of circumstances. I will not be defeated, and no weapons formed against me will prosper.

Each time I dance something releases itself that has held me in bondage and I am encouraged. It has made me more conscious of the things I do with the hands used to praise Him, and each step I take before Him with my feet makes me more conscious of the places I go. I cannot describe the feeling of serving and praising Him through the Dance Ministry; but it is so sweet that I seek ways to create the same experience daily in all areas of my life.

It is important that we honor our transition of becoming like Christ in everything we do and without hesitation. Jesus makes this clear in Luke 9:57- 62. As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." Luke 9: 57- 62.

Seeking ways to honor our commitment to Christ should be a priority for every Christian. Seeking daily fulfillment through obedience is a critical function of the new creature, thus making it a successful transition.

— *Sister Clivette Jones*

### EVANGELISM REPORT

On July 7-9, 2006, City of Zion's Evangelism Ministry will participate in the Franklin Graham Festival at Camden Yards in Baltimore. In preparation for this event, the team completed a five-week Christian Life & Wellness Course hosted by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. COZ's team will function as Christian Counselors partnering with many other local churches to bring people to Christ!

— *Brother Don Watson*

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*The Mission of the City of Zion Church is to reach the unsaved and undisciplined for Jesus Christ. Our goals are to lead them into Christian Discipleship and Abundant Christian Living, and to equip them to impact the world for Jesus Christ.*

## City of Zion Church:

### “A Higher Place of Praise”

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#### July

- 2—Early Morning Prayer, 9 a.m.
- 5—Bible Study, 7 p.m.
- 8—Couple’s Fellowship, 6 p.m.
- 9—New Disciples Class, 9 a.m.
- 12—Bible Study, 7 p.m.
- 19—Bible Study, 7 p.m.
- 22—Men’s & Women’s Fellowship, 9 a.m.  
 Fishing Trip (men) and Guided Tour of Washington D.C. (women)
- 26—Bible Study, 7 p.m.
- 28—GANG Youth Fellowship Meeting, 7 p.m.
- 28—Pastor Gregory Strong’s Birthday

#### August

- 2—Bible Study, 7 p.m.
- 6—Early Morning Prayer, 9 a.m.
- 9—Bible Study, 7 p.m.
- 12—**No Men’s & Women’s Fellowship**
- 13—New Disciples Class, 9 a.m.
- 16—Bible Study, 7 p.m.
- 23—**No Bible Study**
- 26—**No Couple’s Fellowship**
- 30—**No Bible Study**

## JULY 2006

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

## AUGUST 2006

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

### SUMMER-TIME ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN



- Sign them up for a library summer reading program. For information about Maryland’s Clue Into Reading program, go to any local library to sign up until August 19th.
- Go to Family Fun Day at Columbia Mall, every Thursday at 10 a.m. Carousel rides are free!
- Enjoy Maryland’s local parks and playgrounds. Make it a play date with the children of other City of Zion Disciples.
- Check out the animals at the Washington National Zoo and visit the other Smithsonian institutions in D.C.
- Take the children to a Story Time at a local library. Find local library contact information online at [http://directory.sailor.lib.md.us/pub\\_use/county\\_map.cfm](http://directory.sailor.lib.md.us/pub_use/county_map.cfm).