

Beacon of Light

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"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12



Pastor's Corner

"Esau's Bowl; Jacob's Cup"

"The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'" (Luke 1:30-33)

Seldom is Jacob: Isaac's son, and Abraham's grandson, given his just due in relation to the Christmas story. We find him, though, named here in Luke's account, as part of the legacy bequeathed to Jesus, along with Jacob's descendent David.

So what can we recall about Jacob, and how does he find his way some eighteen hundred years later as part of Jesus' inheritance? And, as importantly, how does he now, some two thousand years beyond the infant and adult Jesus, continue to make himself an invaluable precedent for us who wish to claim all of the promises of God now fulfilled in Jesus?

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Israelite history tells us that Jacob's 12 sons originated the twelve tribes of Israel. Consequently, his offspring, eventually including King David, are referred to as "the house of Jacob." But prior to Jacob's role in the ancestral lineage of the Israelite people, a story we first heard about perhaps as children in our Sunday School or Vacation Bible School classes, was pivotal in determining Jacob's future, and the subsequent path through which God would deliver human salvation.

*We, perhaps, will recall that Jacob had a twin brother Esau. Jacob was born **"clutching his brother's heel"** (Gen. 25:26), which meant that he was the younger of the twin boys. By Hebrew custom and tradition "birthright" was conveyed upon the eldest son, and, with it, the leadership of the family and a double share of the family inheritance. So, by virtue of being the eldest son, Esau was initially entitled to all family "birthright" privileges. However, the other part of this story that so many of us recall from our youth, is something that happened between these twin brothers as young adults:*

"Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. Esau said to Jacob, 'Let me eat some of that red stuff for I am famished.' Jacob said, 'First sell me your birthright.' Esau said, 'I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me'... So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright."
(Gen. 25:29-34)

In this one pivotal moment, the entire future trajectory and legacy of these two brothers' lives would forever be different. In Esau's short-sighted momentary haste to satisfy a keenly felt physical need, he surrendered, perhaps, his most valuable possession: his birthright. And Jacob, understanding more broadly a birthright's life-long merit and worth, was able to acquire this priceless benefit from his elder brother Esau in exchange for a mere bowl of lentil soup. In doing so, Jacob became the inheritor, not only of a double portion of family material wealth but, even more importantly, the inheritor of God's covenant of promise made with his grandfather Abraham, and now passed on through Jacob's father Isaac.

Maintaining and holding on to this covenant of promise wasn't always easy for Jacob. He had to flee from his family later on following a dispute involving his mother, brother, and father. And he spent twenty long, difficult years working for his deceptive uncle Laban before finally being able to leave out with his two wives and their ever-expanding family. But, all the while, God was with Jacob and during one of Jacob's many travels scripture reports, ***"God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and he blessed him. God said to him, 'Your name is Jacob; no longer shall you be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name'...Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured out a drink offering on it..."***
(Gen, 35:9-14)

Jacob's ancestral line would now become the lineage through which God's covenant promises would continue to be protected and fulfilled, up to and including Jesus. As Christians and believers in Jesus Christ, who **"reigns over the house of Jacob forever" (Luke 1:33)**, this now includes each of us who have chosen to place premium value on our own legacy birthright in the tradition of our spiritual ancestor Jacob.

As with Esau, the world and our life circumstance will always provide opportunity to choose what may initially offer appeal to us as a quick fix, an easy answer, or a simplistic material solution for whatever it is we believe to be ailing us in the moment. Could this be what we have just witnessed globally, in this last cycle of recent elections worldwide, where nearly all incumbent national leaders lost elections due to the plague of pandemic induced inflation? As Jacob's enduring example illustrates, our ultimate salvation is not likely to reside in someone's idea of a quick fix, or a simplistic material solution, or in any other version of Esau's bowl by another name. Our most durable and long-lasting solutions to life's problems are most likely to come instead when we choose to drink out of Jacob's cup, a cup shared by all who prize their birthright as inheritors of God's covenant of promise; a covenant of promise ultimately fulfilled in the infant born to us on Christmas day, and who has come to grant us full access to the power and favor of God. And of this child, scripture has said, **"He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."**

May the full bounty of our Lord's favor be yours in this Christmas season and always!

Pastor Mark D. Venson



An elderly Isaac blessing Jacob, oil on canvas by Govert Flinck, 1638



Esau and Jacob reconcile (1844) by Francesco Hayez



Inspirational Thoughts and Encouragement

Four Ways to Use Your Spiritual Gifts

Source: Daily Hope

“Give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.”—Romans 6:13 (NLT)

God has given spiritual gifts to every single follower of Jesus. How do you start using the spiritual gifts God put inside of you? Here are four ways to get started.

1. Discover your gifts. You’ve got to know what your gifts are before you can use them. Stop ignoring the fact that inside of you are some dormant gifts that you’re not even using, and figure out what God has put in you. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 4:14, *“Do not neglect the spiritual gift that is in you”* (GNT).

2. Dedicate your gifts to God. The Bible says in Romans 6:13, *“Give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God”* (NLT).

Maybe you already know what you’re good at, but you’re just not using it for the Lord. You’re using it for yourself. You need to humble yourself and dedicate to the Lord every gift you have. Push all of your excuses out of the way and say, “God, I dedicate back to you what you gave to me.”

3. Develop your gifts. Gifts are like muscles: The more you use them, the bigger they get. You can strengthen and develop and grow what God has given you. Any gift that God gives you can and should be developed. You’ll get better at it by practicing, studying, and by learning from other people who have the same gift.

I’ve learned that when God gives you something, he will give you even more of it if you use it well—more talent, money, influence, relationships, or responsibility. He says, “I can trust that person. I’m going to give that person more and more and more.”

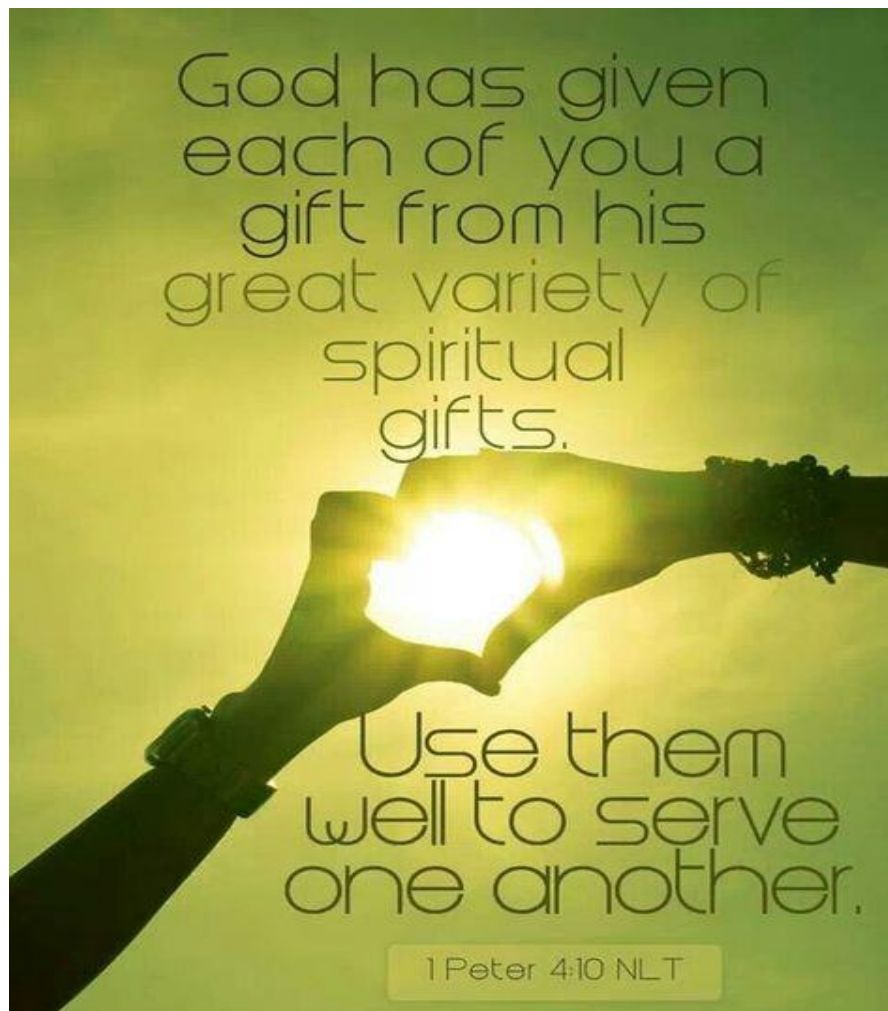
4. Deploy your spiritual gifts. “Deploy” means to put into service. You get out on the field, and you start doing something. Romans 12:6 says this: *“We are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us. If our gift is to speak God’s message, we should do it according to the faith that we have”* (GNT).

What’s the best way to discover and dedicate and develop and deploy your spiritual gifts? In a small group. It’s a testing ground! If you are not in a small group, I encourage you to get connected to one this week so that you can test and develop your spiritual gifts in the safe and supportive environment of friends who will encourage you.



Talk It Over

- What gifts in your life have you not yet dedicated to God? What would it look like to dedicate those gifts to him?
- How do you need to start developing one of your spiritual gifts this week?
- When have you deployed one of your spiritual gifts? What spiritual gift do you need to deploy now?



*****KIDZ CORNER*****



MINISTRY, FELLOWSHIP AND FUN!!

The EUMC Youth have enjoyed many field trips and outings during 2024. On November 5th, Election Day, we were able to visit and tour several landmarks in Washington DC, including one of the Smithsonian Museums, the Washington Monument and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial.



For our first stop we visited the Smithsonian Institute of American History on Constitution Avenue. We enjoyed the “First Ladies” exhibit and all the beautiful gowns. We got to see the beautiful gown that First Lady Michelle Obama wore to her first Inaugural Ball in 2009. Many of the youth on the trip had not been born when President Barack Obama was first elected President.



We also learned a few facts about the Smithsonian – there are actually 21 museums, 21 libraries and 14 research centers and the National Zoo all that collectively make up the Smithsonian Institute. We enjoyed the many exhibits and had fun!



Our second stop was the Washington Monument – This was everyone’s favorite stop and we had an awesome time! There are 2 elevators in the Monument along with 896 steps; we definitely took the elevator. The sky was clear, the views were amazing and the city was beautiful! No one wanted to leave & a few of the teens wanted to move in.



Our final stop was a visit the impressive Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial. The memorial honors Dr. King’s legacy as a dynamic and inspirational leader and the struggle for freedom, equity and justice. This is the only monument on the mall dedicated to an African American. The monmument is located at the water’s edge and includes several inspirational quotes from Dr. King. We had a great day touring DC and hope to return soon to visit other interesting places.

Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial



UPCOMING EVENTS

The Ebenezer Youth Choir: The Choir will sing on the third Sunday in December with the Chancel Choir. We practice on Tuesday's at 8:00PM using Zoom.

Christmas Goodie Bags: The Children's and Youth Ministry team will be delivering Christmas Goodie Bags the week of December 16th.

Ignite Youth Conference: March 7-9, 2025, in Ocean City MD. This is a high impact, high energy worship experience for youth in grades 6-12 sponsored by the United Methodist Conference. We will meet with the Youth in January to discuss participation.



Keeping You Informed

Don't Let Loneliness Harm Your Health

Source: WebMD

What It's Not. Loneliness isn't simply about being alone—some people are happy on their own. And it's not how many people you know or how often you see them, or a bad day when you don't feel connected. What matters is to have strong connections. Those who do tend to be happier, healthier, and more productive. Those who don't may feel isolated, misunderstood, and depressed: lonely. It can take a physical toll, too. But you can take steps to overcome that.

Immune System. If you're lonely for a long time, it may make it harder for your body to fight sickness. Part of the reason for this may be that loneliness triggers some of the hormones your body makes when you're under stress. And that can dim how well your immune system works, too. Many other things also affect how well your body defends itself. Your doctor can help you pinpoint what changes might help.

Blood Pressure. If you're lonely—especially if it lasts for 4 years or longer—your blood pressure is more likely to go up. Scientists who study this effect can't prove that loneliness is to blame. But they found that the rise isn't caused by other things like age, gender, diet, or family background.

Exercise. An active lifestyle helps keep you well in body and mind. If you're lonely, you're more likely to cut back on or stop your workouts. Don't do that! Stay in the game. Walk with a friend, go to the gym, play a game of neighborhood kickball—being active with pals is a way to start or grow relationships that make you feel better. Aim for at least 2.5 hours of activity per week. If you have health problems, check with your doctor first.

Mental Sharpness. Your ability to solve problems or remember things as you age is likely to be affected if you feel lonely. And you may have a greater chance of a brain disease like Alzheimer's. Keep in mind that a lot of things affect those risks, and research doesn't prove that loneliness causes these conditions. But at any age, finding ways to connect with others is wise.

Smoking. You're more likely to light up when you're lonely. But this habit is bad for you from head to toe. Smoking is linked to diabetes, heart disease, and lung illnesses, and it affects nearly every organ in your body. Some people reach for a cigarette when they're stressed. If that's you, talk with your doctor about how to quit and find other ways to manage stress. Even if it takes more than one try to kick the habit, it's worth it. Keep at it!

Poor Heart Health. The more lonely you've been over your life, the more likely you are to have conditions that affect your heart health: obesity, high blood pressure, and bad cholesterol levels, for example. And women who are lonely may be more likely to get coronary heart disease. Why? There could be many reasons -- like if you smoke, get depressed, or don't work out when you're lonely.

Depression. It affects your body as well as your mind. If you're lonely, you may start to feel bad about your life and get depressed. And depression can be isolating, so you start to feel even worse. If you have symptoms that are severe or last more than two weeks -- including feeling down or hopeless, less interest in things you usually enjoy, low energy, sleep problems, or appetite changes—get help. Tell your doctor or call a counselor.

Weight Gain. You're more likely to add pounds when you're lonely. Why? You might eat more than usual or unhealthy foods to soothe yourself, or you might stop your workouts. This can make you feel worse about yourself and may also make you more likely to get conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. So if your weight is going up, it's a good idea to look at your emotions, as well as your diet and exercise.

Sleep. You might toss and turn more, or have a tough time falling asleep if you're lonely. That can make it harder to focus during the day and put you in a bad mood. It may be bad for your health, too. Over time, poor sleep can make diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, depression, and obesity more likely.

Drinking and Drugs. You may be more likely abuse drugs, including alcohol, if you're lonely. It may give you a false sense of feeling better, but it doesn't last and will backfire. Over time, it can seriously damage your body, family, work life, and relationships.

What About 'Me' Time? Everyone is different. You may need more time on your own to recharge, compared with someone who's more of an extrovert. That can be healthy and normal. It's only a problem if you feel too disconnected from other people. This can happen if you stay on your own too much. But it can also happen if you simply don't feel understood or cared for—even if there are lots of people around.

Take Action. Look for ways to connect. Interested in chess, hiking, tennis, bridge, or books? Join a club and get to know others with the same interests. Make plans with friends and family. Talk to them about how you feel. If you find it really hard to connect with people—even those you know well—it may help to talk with a therapist. Take care of yourself, too: Regular exercise, good sleep, and eating for wellness can boost your mood.

When You Need Help. Almost everyone feels a little lonely now and then. But if you try to reconnect and still feel isolated after several weeks, or if you're so lonely, depressed, or anxious that it gets in the way of your work or home life, tell your doctor. You can get help—things like therapy, lifestyle changes, and medicine for certain conditions—to get back on your feet.



Is It Aging or Alzheimer's?

Source: WebMD

Is Your Memory Slipping? We all forget things sometimes, especially when life gets busy. You may start to notice this happening more often as you get older. Mild memory loss can be a normal part of aging. It doesn't necessarily mean you're going to have dementia. Only 1% of people over age 65 with normal age-related memory issues will get dementia each year.

When Forgetfulness Is a Problem. If memory loss makes it hard for you to handle your daily tasks, that's a sign you shouldn't ignore. Are you forgetting things you only just heard? Asking the same question over and over again? Relying on lots of paper or electronic reminders just to get through the day? Talk to your doctor if you or your family notices that happening to you.

Hard to Plan or Solve Problems? Everybody makes a mistake sometimes. Maybe you made an error in the checkbook last month or paid the wrong amount on a bill. That's normal stuff we all do. But if you are really struggling to do things like follow directions in a familiar recipe or keep track of bills the way you used to do, it could be a warning sign of memory problems.

Struggle With Everyday Tasks. Having trouble using that TV remote? Forgot how to set the microwave? If you need a little help now and then with those kinds of things, it's likely nothing to worry about. But if you have problems doing regular activities you're used to doing, like driving to places you always go, playing favorite games, or finding your way at the grocery store, it may be a sign of a more serious memory issue.

Where Did I Park? We've all had it happen. You come out of the store and think, "Now, where'd I leave my car?" It's normal to forget where you parked now and again. If it happens regularly, though, check with your doctor. It could be a warning sign of dementia.

Can't Find Your Keys. Most of the time when you forget where you've left something, like your keys or your glasses, you should be able to think back, retrace your steps, and find whatever it is. If you notice you're losing things all the time and you can't go back and spot them, that's a common sign of a bigger memory problem.

Losing Track of Time. Most of us have woken up and thought to ourselves, "What day is it?" It won't take you too long to figure it out. But if you are often losing track of dates, seasons, or the passage of time, that's another sign of real memory trouble.

How Did I Get Here? If you walk into a room and can't remember what you were doing, that's not cause for concern. It happens to all of us. But people with Alzheimer's disease sometimes forget where they are. Or they find themselves somewhere and don't remember how they got there. If that's a problem you have, it's a good idea to get help.

What's the Word for It? It's normal to have trouble finding the right word sometimes. Or you might use a word the wrong way. Not to worry. But people with Alzheimer's disease often start to have real trouble talking or writing. They might find it hard to recall the right term for familiar objects or the name of somebody they know well. If you're struggling with names, words, or what to say next, it may be a sign of more serious memory loss.

Withdraw From Friends and Family. Are you avoiding friends, family, or co-workers? Is it hard to carry on or follow a conversation? When memory problems become more severe, it's common for people to lose interest in hobbies, social events, or other activities they used to like doing. If that sounds like you, it's time to talk to someone about it.

•
Take a Memory Test. If you aren't sure if what you're going through is just regular aging, a doctor can help you figure it out. They'll know if the memory loss you have falls within the normal range or not. Your doctor will ask you questions and may ask you to take a series of tests. They may also check you for other problems that can look like dementia, such as medication side effects or depression.

Is There Anything I Can Do? If your memory is OK but you're still worried, there may be something you can do about it. People who spend time reading, solving puzzles, or otherwise staying engaged are less likely to get Alzheimer's. It's possible that these activities can help you to keep your mind sharp. It's also a good idea to lower your stress, eat right, and exercise.



Parkinson's Disease Explained **What You Need to Know About This Movement Disorder**

Sources: NIH News in Health, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, National Institute on Aging, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, MedlinePlus, September 3, 2024

Most people first start experiencing symptoms around age 70.

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a progressive movement disorder of the nervous system. PD is one of the most common nervous system disorders, especially among older adults. It's estimated to affect between 500,000 and 1 million Americans.

Early signs of PD such as a slight hand tremor are often subtle, and symptoms gradually worsen over time. The condition can eventually disrupt balance, making walking and talking difficult. It can also cause serious changes to emotions, cognition (thinking), and sleep patterns.

There's no cure, but there are treatments that can help manage symptoms.

Who Gets Parkinson's Disease?

Anyone can develop Parkinson's disease, but men are slightly more likely to develop it than women.

If you have a close family member with PD, your chances of developing it are higher. While some cases are linked to specific genetic mutations, not all are.

Most people first start experiencing symptoms around 70 years old, and the chances of developing it increases with age. But for a small number of people, PD can start sooner, before age 50.

What Causes It?

Parkinson's disease happens when nerve cells in specific parts of the brain, particularly in an area of the brain called the substantia nigra, break down and die over time. Many of the cells in this part of the brain are responsible for producing the chemical dopamine, which helps control motor function (movement). When these cells break down, dopamine levels drop, leading to problems with movement.

Scientists don't know exactly what causes these nerve cells to die, but it likely comes from a combination of genetic changes and environmental influence (such as exposure to air pollution, certain pesticides, and other chemicals).

What Are the Symptoms?



By the numbers

Between **500,000 and 1 million** people in the United States are estimated to be living with Parkinson's disease (PD).

PD is more common in **older adults** as the risk of developing it increases with age. The average age of onset is around **70 years old**.

Although rare, some people develop PD as young as **age 50**. This is known as "**early onset**" PD.

PD affects **more men** than women.

About **15% to 25%** of people with PD have a **family member** who also has the disease. Having one or more close relative with PD increases your risk of developing it.

SOURCE: NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS AND STROKE

Parkinson's disease has motor and non-motor symptoms. Some common motor symptoms include:

- Resting tremor or shakiness, especially in a hand, a foot, or the jaw
- Bradykinesia (slowed movement)
- Stiffness or rigidity in the limbs and trunk of the body
- Trouble with speech, balance, and coordination.

Early on, someone with PD may notice a slight tremble in their hand or foot. Simple movements like buttoning a shirt can become difficult and take much longer. As the disease progresses, they often develop a distinct, shuffling walk with shorter steps. They may move more slowly, lean forward, and have trouble swinging their arms as they walk. Their face may appear expressionless or have a "masked" appearance (due to decreased blinking and other facial movements).

Non-motor symptoms are also common and may appear years before movement issues. They include:

- Depression, anxiety, and emotional changes
- A poor or lost sense of smell
- Constipation and bladder problems
- Sleep disorders such as sleep-talking and acting out vivid dreams.

As the disease progresses, it may cause symptoms such as trouble swallowing, chewing, or speaking, as well as cognitive impairment (problems with thinking) or even dementia.

How Is It Diagnosed?

There's no single test for Parkinson's disease. Doctors usually diagnose it based on medical history and a neurological examination.

During the exam, the doctor will look for symptoms like tremor, muscle stiffness, slow movements, and problems with balance and walking. They may also do testing to rule out other disorders with similar symptoms. These tests may include blood and lab tests, as well as brain imaging scans. If symptoms improve after taking medication, this can help confirm the diagnosis.

How Is It Treated?

There isn't yet a cure. But there are treatments available to help relieve symptoms, especially in the earlier stages.

- **Medications.** Levodopa is a common medication for PD. It helps control motor symptoms by replenishing dopamine levels in the brain. This medication is usually combined with another medication to reduce side effects. Other medications can help treat tremor, rigidity, and non-motor symptoms like depression.
- **Deep brain stimulation (DBS).** In severe cases where medications aren't working well enough, doctors may recommend DBS to ease symptoms. Electrodes implanted in the brain send electrical pulses to the parts of the brain that control movement. This can help reduce movement-related symptoms and improve motor function.
- **Lifestyle and complementary therapies.** A healthy diet, exercise, and therapies like tai chi or dance can help manage symptoms and improve overall well-being.

Most treatments focus on improving the primary movement symptoms. But some medications and therapies can also improve problems with sleep, constipation, and cognition.

Living With Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease is a chronic, progressive condition, and there is no way to predict how quickly or severely the disease will progress for any one person. While some people experience mild motor disruptions, others become more severely disabled. But the good news is that many people can live active and fulfilling lives for many years after diagnosis.

Research, Resources, And Support

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) supports PD research at NIH and across the country. Current NINDS-funded research programs are studying how the disease develops and progresses and are working to develop new medications that can delay, prevent, or even reverse it.

If you or a loved one is dealing with PD, you can:

- Learn more about the research that's happening
- Help with research and improve care for those with PD by getting involved in a clinical trial
- Find organizations that offer resources and support



4 Discoveries Beyond The Brain NIH Research Explores Early Signs Of Brain Disorders

Source: MedLinePlus Magazine

Scientists developed a simple skin biopsy that could identify people with certain disorders, including Parkinson's disease.

Neurodegenerative diseases—such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease (PD), Lewy body dementia (LBD), and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (also known as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease)—affect millions of people around the world. These conditions progressively damage nerve cells in the brain and nervous system. Over time, this can lead to problems with movement, thinking, memory, and more.

A century ago, many neurological conditions could only be diagnosed through an autopsy (after the person had died). Fortunately, today's doctors and scientists have more ways to examine the brains and nervous systems of living patients. But these disorders can still be challenging to detect. Current diagnostic tools often identify these diseases after they have already started to damage the brain.

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) leads research to help better understand, diagnose, and treat these conditions. Here are four recent discoveries that may help doctors and scientists spot early signs of damage, develop and test new treatments, and figure out who might benefit most from specific therapies.

Heart Imaging Reveals Early Signs. NINDS researchers at the NIH Clinical Center used a new method to identify early signs of PD and LBD. This team used a special type of PET scan to look at the hearts of people at high risk for these diseases. They found that people who later developed PD or LBD had levels of a chemical called norepinephrine in their hearts that were much lower than is typical, years before they showed any symptoms.

These findings suggest that PD or LBD might start in the part of the nervous system that controls automatic body functions (like heart rate and blood pressure) even before they affect the brain. Being able to spot these early signs could change how doctors understand and treat these diseases.

Blood Tests For Mitochondrial Damage. NIH-funded researchers are developing a blood test that measures the level of damage to the DNA inside mitochondria—the cell’s energy producers. Previous research suggests that mitochondrial damage may be linked to some cases of PD, so focusing on this damage may help identify and diagnose PD early on. In this study, blood samples from people with PD showed more cell damage compared to samples from healthy volunteers. Some people with PD also had more damage than others.

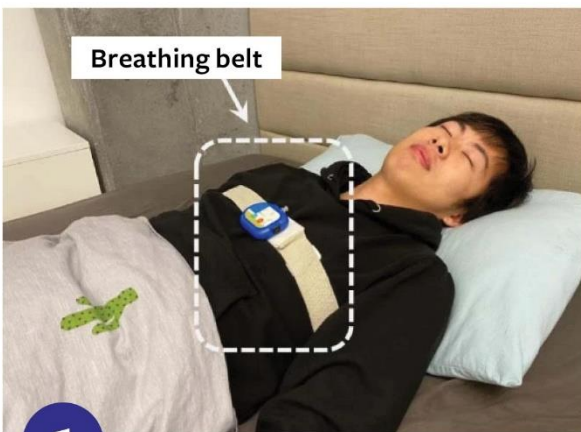
Researchers still need to show that the test works in larger and more diverse populations. If successful, the test could help identify treatments that target mitochondria, learn which patients are most likely to respond to certain treatments, and determine whether a treatment is working.

Artificial Intelligence Analyzes Sleep Breathing Patterns. In another innovative study, NINDS-funded researchers used an artificial intelligence (AI) program to identify PD by analyzing breathing patterns during sleep. The researchers tested the AI program using two types of sleep data: breathing patterns and brain activity.

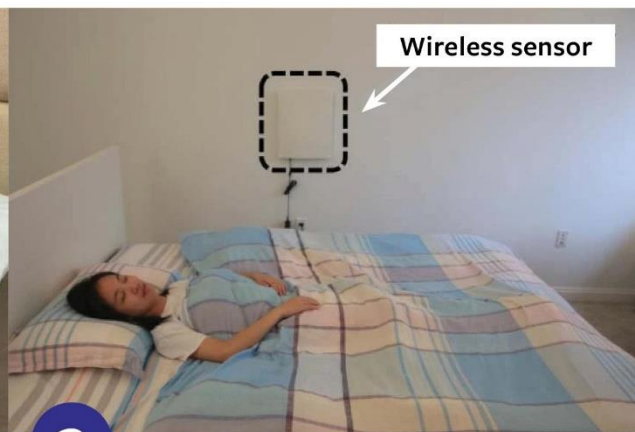
By looking at 12 nights of sleep test data from people with and without PD, the program was able to identify those with PD with a high degree of accuracy. It also detected small changes in PD symptoms over a longer period of time more accurately than traditional clinical assessments.

This program could help both doctors and researchers. By using this tool, doctors may find PD earlier, and researchers may develop new treatments easier and faster. However researchers need to test it with more people from diverse backgrounds first. They also think it could be especially helpful for people who live in remote areas or have trouble leaving home.

Top: A participant wearing a chest belt during a sleep study to measure breathing patterns. Bottom: A wireless sensor uses radio signals to monitor breathing patterns without physical contact during sleep.



1 A participant wearing a chest belt during a sleep study to measure breathing patterns.



2 A wireless sensor uses radio signals to monitor breathing patterns without physical contact during sleep.

Image 1: A participant wearing a chest belt during a sleep study to measure breathing patterns. Image 2: A wireless sensor uses radio signals to monitor breathing patterns without physical contact during sleep.

Skin Biopsy For Neurodegenerative Diseases. NIH-funded researchers developed a simple skin biopsy that may identify people with PD, LBD, and related disorders. This quick, nearly painless test looks for phosphorylated alpha-synuclein, a specific protein that's associated with certain neurodegenerative diseases.

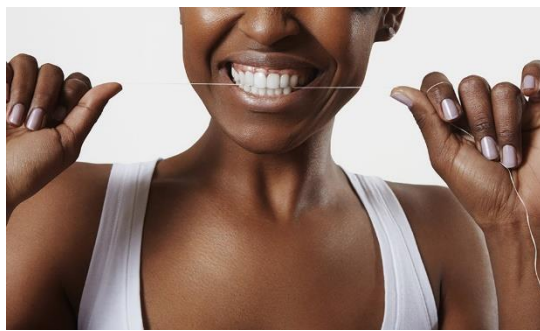
In this study, researchers looked at small skin samples from people diagnosed with one of these conditions and people without any history of neurodegenerative diseases. The test found this protein in more than 90% of people with a diagnosis compared to only 3% of individuals without one. This could lead to faster, more accurate diagnoses and earlier treatments for patients.



Gum Disease: By The Numbers

Nearly half of adults in the United States have some form of periodontal disease

Source: MedlinePlus Magazine, July 2, 2024



Brush and floss regularly to prevent or control gum disease.

Gum disease, also known as periodontal disease, is a leading threat to dental health and the most common cause of tooth loss.

Gum disease is caused by a buildup of plaque—a sticky film of bacteria—on and around the teeth. If you don't remove plaque on a regular basis, it can cause inflammation and infection. This infection can break

down the gum tissue, bone, and connective tissue that support your teeth. Over time, teeth may become loose and need to be removed.

The first stage of gum disease is gingivitis. During this stage, the gums may become red and swollen, and they may bleed easily. Left untreated, gingivitis can develop into periodontitis, a more serious form of gum disease. In periodontitis, the gums pull away from the teeth, forming pockets that trap bacteria and lead to infection.

The best way to prevent or control gum disease is by maintaining an oral hygiene routine. Brush your teeth twice a day and floss regularly to remove plaque. Also schedule regular dental visits for professional cleanings and routine checkups.

- **More than 42% of all adults** older than 30 have some form of gum disease and **almost 8%** have severe periodontal disease.
- The rate of gum disease increases with age. **Almost 60% of adults 65 years and older** have some form of gum disease.
- Periodontal disease is **more common in men than women**. It affects more than **50% of men** and **35% of women**.

- Smoking can put you at risk for gum problems. **More than 60% of current smokers** have periodontal disease.
- People with certain health conditions may be more likely to develop gum disease. For example, almost **60% of people with diabetes** also have periodontal disease.



Want to Stay Youthful? Avoid These Mistakes

Source: WebMD

You Don't Sleep Enough. If you don't get your ZZZs, your skin can start to wrinkle and sag early. That's in part because your body releases more cortisol, a "stress hormone" that breaks down the collagen that keeps your skin smooth and springy. Try to set up a quiet, soothing bedtime ritual with regular hours, and avoid alcohol, caffeine, and electronics before bed.

You're a Smoker. If you use tobacco, besides raising your chances of getting cancer, you could end up with wrinkled, sagging skin at a younger age. Smoking lessens blood flow that carries essential nutrients like oxygen to the surface of your skin and may slow your body's production of collagen. Talk to your doctor about ways to break the habit.

You're in the Sun Too Much. Some sunlight is good for you, but soaking up too many UV rays damages collagen in your skin and may cause your body to make too much of a protein called elastin. You might notice your skin start to thicken and develop a rough feel with deep wrinkles and varied color (age spots). If you must be in direct sun, cover up with hats, long sleeves, and sunglasses. Use a "broad spectrum" sunscreen that's got a rating of SPF 30 or higher.

You Don't Moisturize Your Skin. If your skin dries out, it can give you the rough and scaly look of an older person. Wash your skin once or twice a day. Try to be fairly gentle because hard scrubbing can irritate it. Use a mild cleanser without alcohol or other ingredients that could inflame, roughen, or dry out your skin. Moisturize with cream twice a day to help seal in moisture that keeps you looking young.

You're Not Eating Healthy. The right foods help prevent heart disease, diabetes, and other illnesses that sap your youthful energy. Consider the heart-healthy Mediterranean diet. It's good for your brain, too. You may have to cut back a little on fatty red meat, but you'll get healthy fats from foods like fish, nuts, olive oil, and avocado, as well as plenty of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.

You Don't Exercise Enough. Regular physical activity is a key way to keep yourself feeling young. It strengthens your muscles, boosts your energy, and improves your mood. Moving around keeps your brain sharp and lessens the risk of age-related diseases like heart disease. You don't need to go to a gym or join a rugby team. Some brisk walking, yard work, or even dancing is just fine -- 30 minutes on most days of the week should do the trick.

You Squint a Lot. When you squint, you crinkle up the skin on your face, which over time can lead to lines and wrinkles. Actually, any expression you make over and over can be a problem. If you're outside a lot, sunglasses might keep you from squinting and help prevent the "crow's feet" that can develop on the outside corners of your eyes. A large, brimmed hat wouldn't hurt either.

You Don't Have a Social Network. Staying connected with friends and family can help you stay young at heart -- and boost your emotional and physical health, too. It helps stave off anxiety, depression, and the dementia linked to old age, including Alzheimer's disease. And when you look for a community, remember, it's the quality of your social connections that matter, not the quantity.

You Don't Watch Your Blood Pressure. High blood pressure raises your risk of age-related problems like vascular dementia and Alzheimer's disease, probably because it damages the tiny blood vessels in your brain. People who control their blood pressure with diet, exercise, and medication seem to be able to slow or prevent this brain decline.

You Don't Lend a Helping Hand. Your body releases more "pleasure hormones," or endorphins, when you spend money on other people than when you spend it on yourself. But it doesn't have to be money. The calmness, pleasure, and connection you feel when you help someone often makes you do it more, which in turn makes you even calmer and happier. It lowers stress and may even help your heart health and immune system -- your body's defense against germs.

You Skip Your Checkup. You should see your doctor for a physical exam every year after age 50. They'll check your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. High levels can lead to heart disease, dementia, and other age-related illness. They may also check for any signs of mental decline, like memory problems. The earlier you find out about problems, the quicker you can start to treat them.



6 Steps to Help You Create Strong Passwords **Be random. Never repeat. Make them long and complicated**

Source: AARP.org, By Marc Saltzman [Originally published Jan. 3, 2023; was updated with new password tips, statistics and advice.]

In this story

A weak link • Quirky is good • Repetition is not • Special characters add challenges • Passphrases aid memory • Passkeys help verify • Browsers can assist

Smartphones and computers make life convenient.

Shop online and your device stores the data. With one click, your name, address, email, phone and payment choice pop up on a site.

But with that ease comes serious risk, and the first mistake can be how you gain access to a site. A username and password combine to form one of the biggest gateways to a data breach.

Predictable word and letter combinations may be shared with friends and family, used across multiple accounts, kept in lists, scrawled on notepads and stowed within the very device that's susceptible to hacking.

If you don't want to use a password manager app, which generates random, complicated passwords to log in to online accounts, you have other ways to create unique, secure passwords to store your information safely.

So what makes a strong password?

1. Be unpredictable in your keystrokes

Choose random words instead of those in a well-worn dictionary. Cybercriminals often run programs that cross reference dictionaries to crack passwords. If you would play the word in a game of Scrabble, don't use it as a password.

Avoid personal details, too. Steer clear of birthday or anniversary dates to unlock your smartphone or gain access to sites. Cybercriminals get clues by looking at social media posts or phishing for information through bogus emails.

Don't use simple combinations:

123456, password, admin, 1234, UNKNOWN, 12345678, 123456789, 12345, abc123 and *Password* were the top 10 in 2023 in the United States, according to a study from Nord Security, an online privacy company headquartered in Vilnius, Lithuania, that partnered with independent cybersecurity researchers for its fifth annual password report.

The worldwide list with information from 35 countries didn't vary much, and even in another language, the patterns were not surprising. In France, the third most popular password was *azerty*, not a French word but the top row of letters on a French keyboard. The sixth most popular password? *azertyuiop*, which adds the remaining letters in the row.

2. Embrace variety and shun cloning

Never repeat the same password, even if it's super strong like *f!P%^&TRf04*. If you use the same password on multiple accounts and your system is breached, cybercriminals not only know your password but also can figure out all the sites and apps you visit.

More than three-quarters of 2,000 respondents to a survey released in June admit they use the same password to log into more than one account, according to Forbes Advisor and Talker Research, formerly OnePoll.

Also avoid using repetitive letters or numbers to make a password longer. *Password* may be weak, but so is *paaaassword*. Sequential numbers and letters, such as *qwerty*, the top row of letters on an English-language keyboard, have the same problem. Don't add the next four letters either: *qwertyuiop*.

3. Use your keyboard's special characters

The National Institute of Standards and Technology recommends passwords of at least eight characters, but that's a low bar for hackers to crack. At least 12 characters is ideal; 20 characters is even better.

While most people won't go this far, the agency says website passwords could be as long as 64 characters. That's when a password manager would be helpful.

When configuring a password, don't limit yourself to lower- and uppercase letters and numerals. You can use punctuation marks and other symbols to make it a lot less likely that a crook will guess your combination:

- ampersand &
- asterisk *
- at sign @
- brackets, open [or close]
- caret ^
- dollar sign \$
- equal sign =
- greater than >
- less than <
- plus +
- slash, forward / or back \
- tilde ~

Some can work as replacements for letters. For example, *D0m8inma\$ter@* for "domain master" or *GO0denuf!1* for "good enough." Have fun with it.

Not all websites accept all special characters. But they often tell you which ones you can use.

4. Opt for a passphrase to create a longer password

A passphrase can be easier to remember than random mixed characters. It can be a sequence of at least four words without spaces and something meaningful to you, such as *myb!rDPolly#1!*, which loosely translates to "my bird Polly is No. 1."

Some people create such a phrase using association techniques. Think of the site you're visiting and create a password that relates to the service, perhaps *Ih8tethisb&nk\$!* for "I hate this bank" or *N3v3rsh0ph3r3ag8in\$* for "never shop here again."

The National Institute of Standards recommends longer passphrases even if you don't include the complexity of special characters.

What you're trying to do is turn the odds more in your favor when hackers try to guess your password. Think of this particular game like a lottery you don't want them to win. Add more balls to the pool with special characters or increase the number of balls drawn with length, and possible combinations turn exponentially against the criminals.

Want to geek out on the odds? A hacker has a roughly 1 in 1.2 trillion random chance of figuring out your password if you're using eight characters with only digits and lowercase letters. The numbers are high because what you type is in a specific order, but the bad guys don't do this manually. If you use a 12-character password and expand your choices to include capital letters and the special characters listed above, the odds of landing on the correct 12-character combo increase to 1 in almost 15 sextillion, as in add 21 zeros on the end.

5. Consider a passkey for verification

A passkey verifies an app or website user through biometrics, such as a fingerprint or facial recognition, using a PIN or swiping to create a pattern. The method uses two keys, one that resides on the app or website and the other through the device accessing it.

- Apple syncs its passkeys through its iCloud Keychain, a built-in password manager that allows user access on any Apple devices.
- Google now has passkeys through its Chrome browser and Android phones, synced to Google Password Manager.
- Microsoft offers logins without passwords for Windows users to sign into Microsoft accounts using their face, fingerprint or PIN.

Also possible: A physical security key to log into important accounts.

6. Accept help from your web browser

If you make your password too simple, you may find websites reject your choice and request you to try again. That's because a data breach for you also has consequences for them.

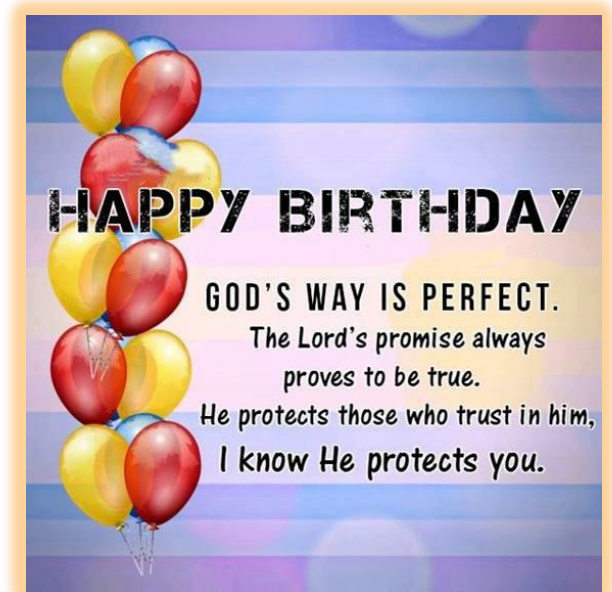
Browsers such as Google Chrome, Apple Safari, Microsoft Edge and Mozilla Firefox have built-in password managers and will prompt you to let them generate complex passwords for you. Most commercial password manager apps, such as subscription-based 1Password, Bitwarden, Dashlane, Keeper Security and LastPass, have the same feature.

If you worry you may be caught up in a data breach, trusted resources such as haveibeenpwned.com and Cybernews' data breach lookup can help. Type in your email or phone number to check if you've been exposed.



Birthdays

October	
Maria Eric-Williams	1
Pershail Young	2
Peggy Dearing	2
Rev. Evelyn Manson	4
Ellen Watkins	13
Marilyn Davis	17
Ellalene Barnaby	18
Jasmine Barber	18
Earleen Johnson	20
Cylestine A. Laury	22
Boyd Poole	23
Thomas Brown	25
Asha Douglas	28



November	
Cynthia Clark	3
Charles Blackburn	4
Steven Gbelee	5
Kaleb Gray	6
Ina Fells	8
Emma Murdock	13
Larry Wilson	13
Tusani Jackson	13
Manson Riley	14
Ebenezer A. Davis	14
Janay McIntosh	22
Joshua Stokes	24
Phil Clark	26
Angelo Brown	30

December	
David King	3
Olive Graves	9
Chinagirl Gbelee	10
Teta Neal	11
Ethel Barnard	13
Andrew Kamara	15
Pearl Stemley	21
Shirley White	21
Barbara Boone	23
Maxine Scott	29
Cleveland Jones	30
Franklin McIntosh	31



Wedding Anniversaries

William & Winnifred Butler
October 22, 1966 [58 years]

James & PearStemley,
October 26, 1950 [74 years]

Phil & Cynthia Clark
December 3, 1977 [47 years]

Happy
Anniversary!

Aaron & Terri Ware
November 2, 1985 [39 years]
Enjoy your special day.

Curtis & Jobie Bell
December 28, 1955 [69 years]

Franklin & Barbara McIntosh
December 24, 1988 [36 years]



From The Newsletter Editor

12 CHRISTMAS PRAYERS

JOY

May the joy of Christ be felt through us.
Luke 1:44

LOVE

Help us see ways to turn love into action this Christmas.
Matthew 25:40

FAITH

Increase our faith so we fully trust in Your promises.
Matthew 1:24

PEACE

May the peace of Christ cover the busyness of this season.
Isaiah 9:6

LIGHT

May the light of Christ shine from within us.
Isaiah 9:2

GRATITUDE

Thank you for all of our blessings, not just the gifts under the tree.
Luke 1:49

PROMISE

Thank you for the promise of eternal life through Jesus.
John 3:16

OBEDIENCE

Help us to be obedient to You even when we don't fully understand.
Luke 1:38

SIMPLICITY

You came as a baby in a manger, help us find value in the simple things.
Luke 2:7

HOPEFULNESS

Fill us with hope for the coming of our savior, Jesus Christ.
Daniel 2:44

GENEROSITY

Show us what gifts we have to offer and help us give them generously.
Matthew 2:11

TOGETHERNESS

Thank you that the gift of Jesus makes us one family together in Christ.
John 1:12

AMEN!

*As you celebrate this Christmas and in the New Year,
may you sense God's gentle reminder that His love is real.
May you rest in the deep assurance that in knowing Him, you have everything!
Merry Christmas and a Safe, Happy, and Prosperous 2025!*

Sis. Ellalene Barnaby





Ebenezer United Methodist Church
4912 Whitfield Chapel Road
Lanham, MD 20706
Phone: 301-577-0770
Email: church896@verizon.net
www.ebenezerunited.org



*"The blessing of the Lord
be upon you."*

- (KJV) Psalm 129:8

*May you rejoice
in the blessings of His love
this Christmas & always.*