

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

Reflections on the Delayed 2020 General Conference: Part II – “Historical Firsts for the Global UMC”

Upon arriving at the Charlotte Convention Center, the site of the Delayed 2020 General Conference (GC), on Monday, April 29, 2024, for the first official day of the final week, I was initially struck by one very noticeable, visible difference from the last Special Call Session of General Conference I attended in 2019. The atmospherics outside of the Convention Center were completely different. I arrived around noon on a warm, sunny spring day, and there were no demonstrators outside of the arena. Unlike St. Louis in 2019, there were no activists or demonstrators outside with placards and bullhorns proclaiming hell and damnation for those inside who held opposing views on matters of human sexuality. As a matter of fact, the environment outside of the arena was so quiet and tranquil that I nervously thought I had somehow come to the wrong location.

(Continued on page 2)

Inside This Issue

Pastor's Corner	Page 1
Inspirational Thoughts and Encouragement—Get Your Joy Back	Page 4
Keeping You Informed	Page 6
➤ Editorial: Project 2025—A Conservative Map to Authoritarianism	Page 6
➤ The Amputation Epidemic We Need To Talk About (And Preventions Strategies)	Page 7
➤ The Link Between Family History and Type 2 Diabetes	Page 11
➤ Avoiding Consequences of Type 2 Diabetes	Page 12
➤ Is Type 2 Diabetes Manageable? Dispelling the Myths	Page 14
➤ Tasty, Diabetes-Friendly Breakfast Ideas	Page 16
➤ H2O For Healthy Aging--Could Staying Hydrated Help You Live A Longer, Healthier Life?	Page 18
➤ Are Whole Body Deodorants Worth Trying?	Page 19
➤ 25 Practical Ways You Can Show Your Grandchildren You Love Them	Page 21
Birthdays	Page 24
Wedding Anniversaries	Page 25
From the Newsletter Editor	Page 26

Pastor's Corner (continued from page 1)

However, after making my way through the main concourse inside, and passing through a Convention Center security checkpoint leading to the main Convention Hall, I soon discovered that I was, indeed, at the right site for the Conference. And after several days of witnessing inside, as an observer, the same level of tranquility and calm I had witnessed outside upon first arrival, it became clear where the difference in tone and spirit from the previous GC came from. The GC delegates present in Charlotte were, in large part, those who valued and preferred denominational unity over theological division and organizational fracture. Former GC delegates who left the UMC through disaffiliation (see previous article) were replaced by new delegates who believed instead in the power of the Holy Spirit to transcend theological and cultural differences on matters of human sexuality.

As a result, by Monday, April 29th, the first day of my arrival on site, historic actions had already taken place in the preceding week. On April 25th, GC delegates voted 586 to 164 for an amendment to the denomination's constitution that, if ratified next year, would call for the U.S., and each Central Conference – Church Regions in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines – to become “Regional Conferences”, with the same authority to adopt the UM Book of Discipline to their own unique setting. This would mean that each Regional Conference, while remaining connected as part of the denomination, would have the freedom to set their own standards for clergy ordination and marriage rites.

On April 27th of the preceding week, GC also made historic revisions in the UM Social Principles, proclaiming the Church's support “for the equal rights, liberties, and protections for all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.” This marks the first time the denomination is calling for human rights designations and protections, no matter a person's gender identity.

On Tuesday, April 30th, my second day of attendance during this second and final week of GC, several other significant measures were adopted or put into motion. GC removed a number of constraints on doing ministry with and by gay people, including lifting a ban on using UM funds that, in any way, affirmed “the acceptance of homosexuality.” A ban of this type was used previously, for example, to deny funding suicide prevention efforts for LGBTQ youth. Tuesday, April 30th also saw historic denominational movement to enter “Full Communion with the Episcopal Church.” If the Episcopal Church affirms the agreement, it would mean that both denominations would, for the first time, recognize each other as “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in which the Gospel is rightly preached and taught.”

If these first two days of my attendance at GC, along with the preceding week, were momentous, the last several days would make this GC the most significant and transformational since the 1968 General Conference which brought about the merger creating the UMC and abolishing the segregated Central Jurisdiction of the former “Methodist Church.” The following are part of what continued to make this GC a historic first for the global UMC:

- ❖ On Wednesday, May 1st without debate, GC removed a forty-year ban on the ordination of clergy who are “self-avowed practicing homosexuals” and removed any possible penalty on clergy or churches for “holding or refraining from holding” same sex weddings. May 1st also brought an official end to the former “Disaffiliation” process.
- ❖ On Thursday, May 2nd GC delegates, by a vote of 523 to 161, voted to eliminate the 52-year old anti-gay assertion in the UM Social Principles that “the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.” This reasoning made broader use of John Wesley’s quadrilateral framework of relying on four sources: namely “scripture, tradition, reason, and personal experience”, to engage in sound and meaningful theological discussion. Another “historic moment” occurred on May 2nd when the GC passed new legislation granting Deacons the authority to preside over the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism in their ministry setting.
- ❖ On Friday, May 3rd, the final day of GC, delegates approved four changes to church law that collectively end any remaining bans related to homosexuality, including penalties for being in a same sex relationship or officiating at same sex weddings. Conversely, pastors cannot be compelled by church law to officiate a same sex wedding if they choose not to do so.

These historic changes, many of which have been long-awaited by those who have often felt themselves or others unjustifiably denied full inclusion in the Church, were reasons why there were, at the conclusion of this Delayed 2020 General Conference, many more tears of joy than I have ever witnessed before in these settings. Going forward, this version of the UMC, though perhaps, for a while, smaller, will also, in my humble opinion, be more representative of the “live and let live” philosophy that draws the circles of our relationships wider, and allows for a much larger tent to be pitched – while continuing to remain under the broad banner of Jesus Christ.

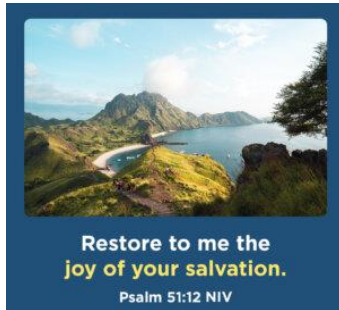
Pastor Mark. D. Venson



Inspirational Thoughts and Encouragement

Get Your Joy Back

Source: Daily Hope



"The Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."—Romans 14:17 (NLT)

What's the easiest thing for you to lose? Your glasses? Your keys? Your mind? All of those things are easy to lose, but the easiest thing of all to lose is your joy. You can lose it with one phone call or email, a letter or conversation. You can even watch a commercial and lose your joy by becoming discontent with your own circumstances or possessions. Joy is so easy to lose.

It not only feels bad when you lose your joy—but when God's children aren't filled with joy, it also makes God look bad. Cranky Christians are bad witnesses. They look like they've been baptized in vinegar because they're never really smiling. And that makes God look bad. God wants his children to be witnesses with their countenances. As Proverbs 15:13 says, *"A joyful heart makes a cheerful face"* (GW).

The Bible tells us that the Christian life can be summed up in three words: goodness, peace, and joy. Romans 14:17 says, *"The Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"* (NLT).

Though joy is key to the Christian life, the reality is that you can lose your joy so quickly and in so many ways. There are thousands of killjoys that will rob you of your joy, even to the point that somebody like Jeremiah, a prophet of God, could say this in Lamentations 5:15: *"There is no joy left in our hearts"* (GW).

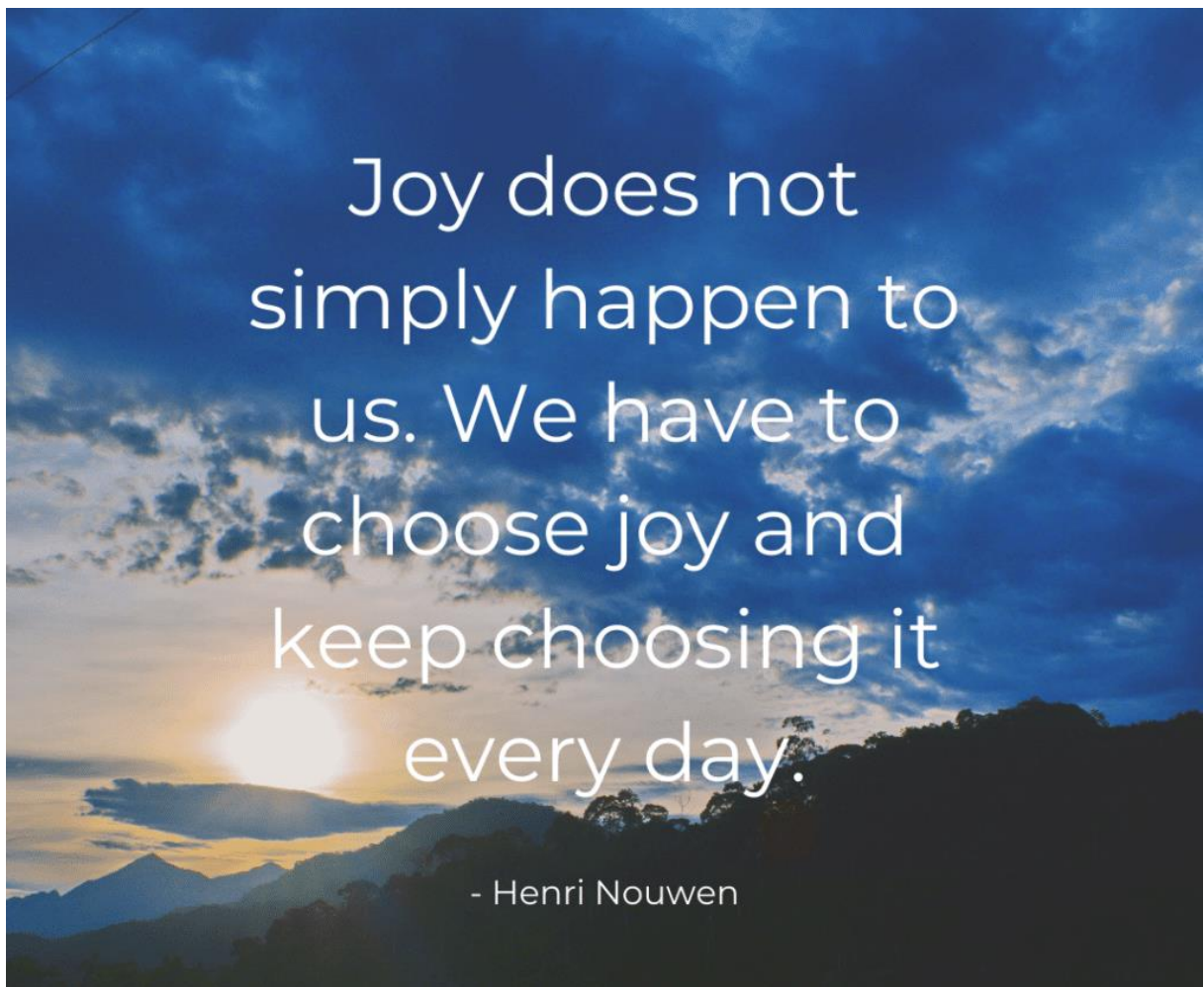
I don't know if that's where you are today. Maybe you feel like you've lost your spark and you're not as close to God as you used to be. Maybe you're just going through the motions of life. If that's how you feel, you need to know that—just like it's easy to lose your joy—it's also quite easy to get your joy back. So how do you get your joy back? The first step is to admit that you've lost it.

If you're not sure if you've lost your joy, do this simple exercise. Look at your past and ask yourself a couple of questions: *Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt closer to God than you do right now? Has there ever been a time in your life when you were more joyful in the Lord than you are right now?* If the answer is yes, then you've lost your joy. And now is the time to get it back.

Do what David did in Psalm 51:12. He knew he'd lost his joy, and he knew God was the only one who could give it back to him. So he prayed, *"Restore to me the joy of your salvation"* (NIV). God restored David's joy, and he's ready to do the same for you. All you have to do is ask. It's the first step in reclaiming your joy.

Talk It Over

- Think of a time when you were more joyful in the Lord than you are right now. What was different then about your spiritual walk and quiet time?
- What are the things that rob you of your joy? Do those things change anything about God? Should they change anything about how much you love him and trust him?
- Do those things change anything about God? Should they change anything about how much you love him and trust him?



Joy does not
simply happen to
us. We have to
choose joy and
keep choosing it
every day.

- Henri Nouwen



Keeping You Informed

Editorial: Project 2025—A Conservative Map to Authoritarianism

Written and contributed by Sybil Wilkes, Blackamericaweb.Com; Source BBC

What You Need to Know:

For weeks, there have been stories and rumblings about Project 2025.

Project 2025 is a 900-plus page transition plan created by hundreds of conservative organizations, and many former Trump officials, under the umbrella of a conservative think-tank, the Heritage Foundation. At its core, the intent is to reshape the United States federal government, consolidating executive power if the Republican candidate wins the 2024 presidential election. According to the conservative organization, it plans to “assemble an army of aligned, vetted, trained and prepared Conservatives, to go to work on Day 1 to deconstruct the administrative state.”

BBC.com reported that Project 2025 “outlines four main aims: restore the family as the centerpiece of American life; dismantle the administrative state; defend the nation’s sovereignty and borders; and secure God-given individual rights to live freely.

Adding, “It is one of several policy papers for a platform broadly known as Agenda 47 - so-called because Trump would be America's 47th president if he won.”

Project 2025 is built on four pillars:

- 1–Policy
- 2–Personnel
- 3–Training
- 4–A 180-day playbook to execute their plans

In an interview, Dr. Kevin Roberts, President of the Heritage Foundation, described the work of the “impartial” Heritage Foundation was to institutionalize “Trumpism” throughout the federal government.

Axios reported that the initial objective is to remove 50,000 federal employees or civil servants and replace them with Trump-aligned workers or “Trump loyalists.” This also includes: plans to restructure the Department of Justice by taking partisan control of that department along with the FBI, the Commerce Department, the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Trade Commission, all agencies that affect the day-to-day lives of Conservatives and their businesses.

There are plans to erase other federal agencies like the Departments of Education and Homeland Security. Also planned is to change the name of Department of Health and Human Services to the Department of Life. With that, all abortions will be outlawed-no exceptions. No contraceptives will be allowed. Nor will the Affordable Care Act exist in the Department of Life, along with deep cuts in Medicare and Social Security.

As far as “securing God-given individual rights to live freely,” in addition to removing the full control over a woman’s body from women, there will also be the elimination of marital equality rights or anything not related to normal heterosexual relationships.

When it comes to immigration, the plan is to use all funds associated with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, and other immigration-related programs to deport every undocumented person, every so-called illegal immigrant, some 10 to 15 million people, removed from the United States. Until they are able to remove immigrants “legally,” there will be camps to hold them, much the same way the incarceration systems hold prisoners and make money from them. And if you think they’ll do this to Brown people, why should Black people not see the writing on the walls...or in the new laws? The conservative state legislatures are removing DEI programs from state businesses and colleges, books from the library shelves and free speech in the classrooms. What makes one think that Black people aren’t next? Not only the aforementioned efforts, but with every judicial or legislative term, there are rulings or new laws diminishing voting rights.

The intensity of stories about Project 2025 amped up this week after the Supreme Court’s decision granting the President immunity from criminal prosecution for “official acts” while in office. The case was brought by former President Donald Trump in the federal 2020 election interference case against him.

As noted by PBS.org, “The president enjoys no immunity for his unofficial acts, and not everything the President does is official. The President is not above the law,” Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in the majority opinion.

But, Roberts added, ‘the system of separated powers designed by the Framers has always demanded an energetic, independent Executive. The President therefore may not be prosecuted for exercising his core constitutional powers, and he is entitled, at a minimum, to a presumptive immunity from prosecution for all his official acts.’

The court’s three liberal justices argued that making a president immune from prosecution makes him “a king above the law.”

Why You Need to Know:

People who say they love and respect democracy have to get their priorities straight. Folks can get sidetracked by stories of dementia or errant children, but they are allowing themselves to fall for the okey-doke: Hey! Look over there! Keep your eyes on the prize: working toward a truly democratic land with equal Justice for all, not the few claiming their rights via Heritage.



The Amputation Epidemic We Need To Talk About (And Preventions Strategies)

Source: *Black Health Matters.com*, by Corynne Corbett



In the Mississippi Delta, which has the highest amputation rates for Black patients in the country — three to four times the national average— Dr. Foluso Fakorede, MD, CEO of Cardiovascular Solutions of Central Mississippi, an interventional cardiologist, has witnessed firsthand how the lack of education on treatment options for peripheral artery disease has impacted his community.

Dr. Fakorede notes that in Southern rural areas, there is a high incidence of diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, and, in some cases, tobacco smoking that leads to plaque buildup. “80% of the patients I see are Black,” he explains. “These elderly folks started dipping and chewing tobacco when they were eight or nine. Back then, they were told it would keep the worms away.”

There are many health disparities in the Delta, including education, economic, transportation, and housing. The crisis heightens when you also layer in healthcare issues, including underinsurance, lack of insurance, and communication issues. “So the risk factors include sugar, the pressure, and it’s not well-managed, and we wait for them to end up in the ER with a gangrene foot. And that doctor looks at them and says, ‘Well. Chop, chop, that’s the treatment. There has been a lack of awareness, not only on the patient side but also on providers; we need to have a conversation.’”

Dr. Fakorede notes that if you use cancer as an analogy, where we catch it early in stage in stage four. The mortality rates of this disease and its advanced ages are worse than most cancers,” he explains. “60% of patients will die within five years from critical limb ischemia, which is an advanced stage of PD. Compared to breast cancer, that is double at that stage.”

This crisis is not just happening in Mississippi. It is also in rural areas of Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas—even the urban cities of Philadelphia and Chicago. Our communities are on fire, and we didn’t even know it.

Four Organizations Come Together to Form The Pulse Alliance to Raise Awareness About PAD

Dr. Fakorede is a member of the [Association of Black Cardiologists](#), one of four organizations that have come together to spread the word about the amputation epidemic. Other organizations, including the [Society of Interventional Radiologists](#), [the Society for Vascular Surgery](#), and the [Society for Cardiovascular Angiography & Intervention](#), sound the alarm about this issue.

- In a survey conducted by the Pulse Alliance, 70% had never heard of Peripheral Artery Disease.
- Nearly 80% of Black and Hispanic adults reported never having a doctor or healthcare provider discuss PAD with them.
- There was a disconnect between the risk factors (diabetes, high blood pressure, smoking) and their personal perceived risk. People with diabetes have 3xs the risks for PAD, while 80% of patients with PAD are smokers.
- We are twice as likely to get a PAD diagnosis and four times as likely to have an amputation.
- Over half (53%) of respondents would wait more than a week with ongoing leg pain before calling their doctor.

Amputation Isn't the Only Option

According to Dr. Goke Akinwande, MD, Medical Director, Vascular and Endovascular Specialist, and an interventional radiologist who practices in St. Louis, this epidemic is not our community's fault. "It's the physician's fault; we don't educate people correctly," he explains." So we call it the sugar, but are your legs being cut off because of the sugar? That is usually the conversation. However, diabetes is challenging on the small vessels in the leg. Your arteries get smaller as they go down to the foot. When you don't have enough blood flow to the foot, it causes sores, which become infected." Dr. Akinwande says to think of it as having a hose tied to a faucet. When you smoke, on the other hand, it impacts the faucet itself and the distal vessels leading to the feet.

"If you have foot pain that doesn't go away, or it gets worse when you walk or asleep, get it checked out," Dr. Akinwande says. "Most primary doctors blame it on neuropathy. Do you know how many patients come to me on drugs for neuropathy? Patients may need an imaging study to see what is going on. So the foot doctor or vascular specialist is your friend."

"So I'm an interventional radiologist and in St. Louis, a specialist for a more severe form of peripheral arterial disease called critical limb ischemia," Dr. Akinwande says. "At this point, there you have pain all the time, and the artery is blocked. So, have figured out a way to get through the blockage, get a balloon up, and get a stent in." When he started his practice, Dr. Akinwande thought many surgeons and interventional cardiologists were also doing this procedure, but they weren't, and since then, through word of mouth, it has consumed his practice.

Educating the Community

While they were raised on the East Coast, both Drs Fakorede and Akinwande are committed to connecting by using methods of education that help them understand how to improve their health. When Dr. Akinwande was on the faculty of a teaching hospital in St. Louis, he drove to the north side of town where the Black folks live to observe the community; he met a Black female podiatrist there. They began doing health fairs together, and she still refers patients to him today. He talks to patients about ways to change their diets, then asks them to send photos of their Thanksgiving meals, with details like what kind of meat they put in the greens.

“I believe in the direct-to-consumer approach; you’ve got to meet people where they are. That has been my successful model here. People have to realize that most people don’t walk into the doctor’s office to have these conversations,” Dr. Fakorede says. “They go to the streets, churches, civic organizations, sororities, fraternities, The Chamber of Commerce. My approach has been to disrupt in a positive way, and they can see that you care.” He says it opens the doors to conversations for concerned family members, those with personal questions who wouldn’t otherwise inquire.

“I talk honestly to my patients in a language they understand. “Hey, listen, that sweet tea you drink is why your sugar levels, hemoglobin, and A1C number, which is a factor in trend in why your plaque buildup is higher, and that leads to no blood flow and your circulation shutdown,” Dr. Fakorede says. “If we can get your sugar controlled, or you can quit that sweet tea, half of those carbs, that will improve your sugar and give you a fighting chance to say, ‘Hey, give me another go at this.’ That’s what’s missing in the conversations with our patients down here.”

In his office, Dr. Fakorede found a solution for patients who got lost in physician-speak. “One thing I’ve noticed is when we doctors walk into rooms with white coats, there’s reverence sometimes that patients get lost in thought. When the doctor asks, ‘Do you have any questions for me?’ Many are intimidated,” he says. “So when the doctor walks out, they get upset and ask the nurse, ‘Can you please repeat what s/he told me?’ So now, I bring in visual aids to explain whatever I am talking about; I speak at a fifth-grade level, use analogies, and ask the patient to repeat the information so I know they understand it.”

Prevention and Screening Recommendations

We have reached a crisis level because our providers haven’t been screening us, and we haven’t known about the tests to ask for. So here is what we need to know about who needs to be screened and when for PAD:

- If you are over age 50, have a history of diabetes, or have used tobacco, dipped or chewed tobacco
- If you have a heart attack, coronary artery disease, have a stent in your heart, or have a stroke.
- If you have had diabetes for over ten years, and sometimes your legs hurt (or feel cold at times)
- If you have a family history of amputation

- When you go to Sam's Club and can't get through the entire place, you must rest because your leg hurts. Then it happens all the time, even when you are asleep. If you have a sore, blame a mosquito or spider bite, and it isn't improving.
- Your foot looks funny. It's dry, scaly, and always ashy, and no amount of lotion seems to help.



The Link Between Family History and Type 2 Diabetes

Source: *Black Health Matters.com*

Type 2 diabetes can run in the family, but it doesn't have to. If you have an immediate family member (parent or sibling) with diabetes, you are more likely to get diabetes or prediabetes. Family history is just one of the many risk factors for type 2 diabetes.

A family history of diabetes is usually influenced by genetics. Certain genes can influence insulin resistance, beta-cell function, and glucose metabolism, which are all key factors in type 2 diabetes development. Understanding the link between family history and type 2 diabetes is important. It highlights the role of genetics and provides an opportunity for early detection and prevention.

Do you come from a family where multiple generations have dealt with this condition? It may have started with your family, but it can end with you. Lifestyle changes have been shown to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes, even if you have a family history of the disease. You can take charge of your health and make informed choices to reduce your risk.

Understanding the Connection

Genetics and family history impact the development of type 2 diabetes in different ways.

- You may inherit genes that increase your risk.
- You may have gene changes that contribute to insulin resistance, a key factor of type 2 diabetes.
- Genetic factors may affect insulin-producing cells in the pancreas.
- Families not only share genes but also lifestyle and environmental factors such as eating habits and physical activity that can also contribute to diabetes risk.

What we know about the genetic component of type 2 diabetes is constantly evolving.

Assessing Your Risk

Diabetes risk is influenced by a combination of factors, including genetics, family history, and lifestyle. You can assess your risk by [collecting information](#) about your family's health history and determining which relatives in your family, if any, have diabetes.

Genetics and family history can increase your risk, but they do not guarantee you will develop diabetes. By assessing your risk and making informed choices, you can take proactive steps to reduce your risk of developing diabetes or manage the condition effectively.

Consider taking the American Diabetes Association's [type 2 risk test](#) You should also seek guidance from your healthcare team to help further assess your risk and develop an action plan.

Reducing Your Risk

By maintaining a healthy weight, adopting a balanced diet rich in whole foods, staying physically active, and completing regular health checkups, you can lessen the influence of genetic and family history factors.

A family history of diabetes increases the risk but does not guarantee the development of type 2 diabetes. Always seek medical guidance when it comes to managing your diabetes, even with lifestyle improvements.

With the right knowledge and lifestyle choices, you can begin your journey towards a healthier future.



Avoiding Consequences of Type 2 Diabetes

Diabetes has become a prominent health challenge worldwide. In 2019, more than 11% of the United States population had diabetes, and this number continues to rise. There is an alarming lack of awareness surrounding this condition as 1 in 5 people with the condition don't know that they have it.

Type 2 diabetes disproportionately impacts the Black community. African Americans are 60% more likely to be diagnosed with the condition and at least twice as likely to be hospitalized and experience long-term complications including death, when compared to non-Hispanic whites

Factors that may contribute to this health disparity include genetics, socioeconomic factors, and access to quality healthcare. Prevention and management are key factors to reduce the impact of type 2 diabetes among African Americans and improve outcomes.

You can navigate your type 2 diabetes diagnosis by understanding the risks and making informed choices. There are several adverse health consequences of type 2 diabetes but many of them may be preventable.

Uncontrolled Type 2 Diabetes

In general, type 2 diabetes control is evaluated by measuring routine blood sugar readings. Blood sugar goals may vary slightly based on patient-specific factors such as age and presence of other health problems. There are two ranges for blood sugar goals.

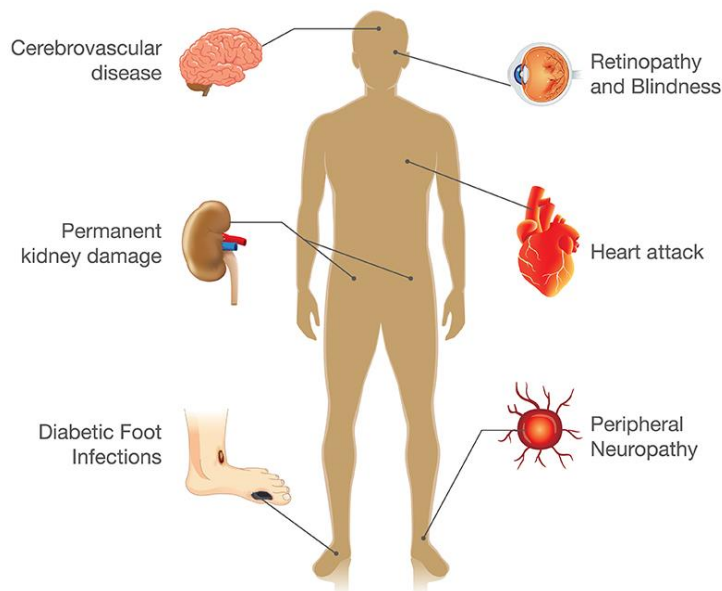
- Fasting (before meal): 80-130 mg/dL
- After a meal (2 hours): less than 180 mg/dL

The A1c test is a blood test that is used to measure the 3-month average of your blood sugars. It is used to provide additional insight into diabetes control. A1c is expressed as a percentage with a recommended A1c target of < 7% for most people with diabetes.

Consequences of Uncontrolled Type 2 Diabetes

If left uncontrolled, type 2 diabetes can result in long term consequences over time. These health risks involve various parts of the body and can greatly impact quality of life and overall health.

Complications of Diabetes Mellitus



Long-term complications of uncontrolled type 2 diabetes include:

Heart problems. Heart disease is the most fatal complication associated with type 2 diabetes. People living with diabetes are two times more likely to have a stroke or heart disease than people who don't have diabetes. Symptoms of heart disease include shortness of breath, tiredness, chest pain, and numbness in your arms or legs. You can maintain your heart health by managing your diabetes.

Kidney damage. Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney damage resulting in chronic kidney disease (CKD). Our kidneys serve as blood filters for our bodies. High blood sugar levels can be present in uncontrolled type 2 diabetes and cause the kidneys to have to work harder, diminishing their function and causing damage long term. CKD often develops slowly, and it may be difficult to identify symptoms of kidney disease until it's too late. You can prevent kidney disease by keeping your blood sugar at goal.

Nerve damage. Nerve damage affects nearly 50% of people living with type 2 diabetes. The most common type is peripheral neuropathy which impacts nerves in the hands, feet, legs, and arms. Symptoms include tingling, pain, increased sensitivity, or numbness of the affected area. Controlling your blood sugar is the best way to prevent nerve damage. You should also have foot exams completed routinely and help identify issues proactively.

Vision issues. Diabetes can damage your eyes over time. It is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in adults 18-64 years of age. People of color are at higher risk of going blind due to diabetes complications. While there aren't any signs or symptoms to monitor

for, you can be proactive by completing an annual eye exam to monitor for eye disease and delay vision loss.

Mental health. Living with diabetes and managing your condition can come with an overload of different emotions. You may feel anxious, worried, discouraged, and frustrated. Address mental health concerns with your health care provider and consider speaking with a therapist or counselor if needed.

Take Control

You can lower your risk of diabetes-related complications by making healthy lifestyle changes, monitoring your readings regularly and working to keep them at goal, taking your medications as prescribed, and following up with your doctor regularly. Medication therapy plays a major role in lowering your risk, especially for those at high risk or who have prediabetes.

Take control of your health and avoid the consequences of type 2 diabetes through informed choices, regular checkups, taking your medications, and committing to a healthy lifestyle.



Is Type 2 Diabetes Manageable? Dispelling the Myths

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic, lifelong condition that is often misunderstood. It accounts for the majority of diabetes cases in the United States. It is commonly associated with poor outcomes and long-term complications. While there are many misconceptions and fears associated with type 2 diabetes, the good news is that it is manageable.

If you have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, it is important that you take your diagnosis seriously. With proper management, it can be controlled by making healthy lifestyle choices and working closely with your healthcare provider. Managing your diabetes can also help reduce your risk of developing complications.

The key to successfully managing your type 2 diabetes is understanding the facts. Being informed is a first step to taking control of your health. Once you understand the facts, you can be proactive about dispelling myths surrounding the condition and feel inspired to take action.

FACT OR FICTION

Continue reading to review some common type 2 diabetes myths and facts.

MYTH: I will have diabetes because several people in my family have it and there's nothing I can do about it.

FACT: While having a family history of diabetes does increase your risk of developing the condition, it is not the only contributing factor. It does not guarantee that you will automatically have diabetes. The development of type 2 diabetes can be influenced by a combination of genetics and lifestyle. Even though you can't control your genetics, you can control your lifestyle.

MYTH: If I have excess weight, it is only a matter of time before I develop type 2 diabetes.

FACT: Having excess weight is among the strongest risk factors for type 2 diabetes. The more excess weight you carry, the higher your risk. While having excess weight is another risk factor of diabetes, it is not the only contributor. This risk also varies among individuals which is why some people with excess weight never develop diabetes and others who are at a healthy weight do.

MYTH: I have not experienced any symptoms so my blood sugars must be normal.

FACT: High blood sugar levels can occur without notable symptoms especially in the early ages. On the other hand, some people do experience symptoms. High blood sugar levels can still contribute to long term damage, even if you aren't experiencing symptoms.

Common symptoms of high blood sugar include:

- Increased thirst
- Increased hunger
- Frequent urination
- Unexplained tiredness
- Unexplained weight loss

MYTH: I have to stick to a specific diet in order to manage diabetes.

FACT: There is not a one-size-fits-all diet for people living with diabetes. It is most important to make healthy food choices, and it's recommended that you follow a meal plan that is specific to your health needs and lifestyle. Key components for managing your diet include carbohydrate management, portion control, and consistency.

MYTH: I don't need to take medication to manage my diabetes.

FACT: There are several factors that determine whether you will need to take medication to manage your diabetes. Lifestyle changes can be highly effective in managing the condition. While some people are able to successfully manage their condition without medication, others may require multiple medications and that's okay.

Remember that your type 2 diabetes journey is unique. You should discuss with your healthcare provider whether or not medications are needed. Work with your care team to adjust your treatment plan based on your specific needs and goals.

References

- National Library of Medicine. [Diabetes myths and facts](#)
- American Diabetes Association. [Know Your Facts About Diabetes](#)
- [Debunking type 2 diabetes misconceptions](#)



Tasty, Diabetes-Friendly Breakfast Ideas

Source: WebMD

Eat a Healthy Breakfast

It's often called the most important meal of the day. That may be even more true for people with diabetes. A morning meal helps to keep your blood sugar steady all day long. One study found that skipping it caused bigger blood sugar spikes after lunch and dinner. But not all breakfasts are created equal. To start your day off right, your breakfast should include fiber, lean protein, and healthy fats.

Overnight Oatmeal

High in fiber, oatmeal can help keep blood sugar levels in check. Choose rolled or steel-cut oats. They're less processed than the instant kind. Top them with fruit for sweetness and nuts for an extra dose of protein. Don't have time to cook in the a.m.? Try overnight oats. Mix one part oatmeal with two parts water or low-fat milk. Leave it in the fridge for a creamy bowl in the morning.

Nut Butter and Fruit

Give the classic PB&J a healthy upgrade. Spread no-sugar-added peanut, almond, or other nut butter on whole-grain toast. Look for bread with at least 3 grams of fiber per slice. Top with fresh fruit, such as slices of strawberries or raspberries. You can also swap the bread for whole-grain waffles or pancakes. If you're using the frozen kind, check that the label lists a whole grain as the first ingredient.

Egg Sandwich

Scrambled, boiled, or poached, eggs are packed with protein -- there's 6 grams in a large one. Protein takes longer to digest, which may help keep blood sugar levels steady. For an on-the-go meal, make a sandwich with a scrambled egg, low-fat cheese, and tomato slice on a whole-wheat English muffin. You can add a slice of lean meat, such as low-sodium ham or turkey, for extra protein.

Greek Yogurt Parfait

Creamy Greek yogurt has less sugar and fewer carbs than the regular kind. It's also high in protein, with 23 grams per cup. Layer non- or low-fat plain yogurt with fiber-rich berries and nuts, such as walnuts and almonds. The nuts add crunch and healthy fats. Bonus: Eating nuts regularly can lower your chances of having heart disease -- a condition that diabetes puts you more at risk for.

Sweet Potato and Chicken Sausage Hash

Bacon and beef sausages are high in saturated fat and salt. For a healthier breakfast, choose chicken or turkey sausage. A three-link serving has 12 grams of protein, but half as much fat as the beef kind. Serve it in a hash: Sauté mushrooms, onions, and bell peppers until soft. Add spices, chicken sausage, and a splash of water. Cook for a few more minutes, and then toss in diced cooked sweet potato for extra fiber and vitamin C.

Vegetable Omelet

Pile on non-starchy vegetables, such as broccoli, spinach, kale, and tomatoes. They're low in carbs and high in fiber and nutrients. They're also good sources of vitamin C, and research suggests that getting enough of the vitamin can help your body manage blood sugar. Add cooked vegetables and low-fat cheese to eggs. Serve the omelet with a slice of whole-grain toast.

Savory Oatmeal

Morning oats don't have to be sweet. You can top them vegetables and lean protein for a risotto-like dish. You can use dinner leftovers, such as roasted chicken, tomatoes, and spinach with a drizzle of lemon juice and olive oil. Or add sautéed kale and mushrooms and a cooked egg. Finish with a little low-sodium soy sauce and sesame seeds.

Breakfast Tacos

You can have tacos in the morning, too. Scramble eggs with spinach. Mix in black beans, which add 8 grams of fiber and 8 grams of protein per half-cup. Serve in a whole-grain corn or whole-wheat tortilla. For extra flavor, add salsa and chili sauce. The hot peppers add spice and may help with diabetes: One study found that eating them may lower the spike in insulin, the hormone that controls blood sugar, after meals.

Avocado Toast

This creamy green fruit is loaded with nutrients and heart-healthy fats, and each half has 7 grams of fiber. That combo helps you stay full for longer, which promotes weight loss. Smash half an avocado onto a slice of whole-grain bread. Add a squeeze of lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Top with a hardboiled, fried, or poached egg.

Cottage Cheese with Fruit

Cottage cheese is a protein superstar. One cup of the low-fat kind packs in 28 grams of protein for only 6 grams of carbs. For a quick and easy breakfast, serve low-fat cottage cheese with fruit and nuts. A combo to try: Fresh or thawed sliced peaches and pistachios.

Whole-Grain French Toast

French toast can be an occasional breakfast treat. But thick slices doused in syrup are high in carbs. For a healthier spin, dip whole-grain bread in a mixture of eggs, skim milk, vanilla, and cinnamon. Skip the sugary syrup and top them with a little peanut butter and fruit. Or make your own jam by mixing together high-fiber chia seeds and mashed fruit. Let stand until it thickens.

Blueberry-Spinach Smoothie

Smoothies are a tasty way to sneak more fruits and vegetables into your day. For a blueberry-spinach version, put a half-cup blueberries, cup of spinach, and half a banana into a blender. Pour in a half-cup of low-fat milk. Blend until smooth. For a healthy boost, add a spoonful of ground flaxseed. High in fiber and omega-3 fats, flaxseed may help lower blood sugar in people with diabetes.



H2O For Healthy Aging Could Staying Hydrated Help You Live A Longer, Healthier Life?

Source: MedlinePlus Magazine, May 2024



Try to drink about eight glasses of fluids every day. Water is essential for just about every function in our bodies, from keeping our organs working properly to regulating our body temperature. Losing more water than we take in can lead to dehydration, which happens when your body doesn't have enough fluid to function properly.

Our bodies are constantly losing fluids. Sweating during exercise or in hot weather, dealing with an illness such as diarrhea or vomiting, and even breathing and going to the bathroom all cause our bodies to lose water. And as we age, our bodies don't retain fluids as well. We may also become less aware of our thirst. This makes staying hydrated even more important.

But here's a splash of good news! A study from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) found that people who stay hydrated throughout their lives are less likely to develop chronic diseases and may even live longer, healthier lives.

Linking hydration to long-term health

The research was part of the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) study, which investigates heart health in adults living in different U.S. communities. The researchers tracked the health of more than 11,000 adults for 30 years. This included measuring levels of blood sodium, an electrolyte that helps regulate fluids in the body. When we're dehydrated, our blood sodium levels tend to go up.

Researchers found that people with higher sodium levels were more likely to develop chronic diseases (such as heart failure, diabetes, and dementia) later in life. They also tended to show more signs of advanced biological aging, such as raised systolic blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar—signs that indicate how well your body is functioning. These participants were more likely to die at younger ages, but those who stayed well hydrated developed fewer chronic health conditions and tended to live longer.

Will you live longer if you drink more water?

Not necessarily. While these findings show a link between staying hydrated and healthy aging, they don't prove cause and effect. We need more research to know whether good hydration actually prevents disease or extends your life. In the meantime, this study is a good reminder that staying hydrated is a simple (but impactful!) way you can invest in your health and well-being.

How much fluid should you drink?

It depends on factors like your age, activity level, and climate. But a good general rule is to aim for about eight glasses of fluids every day. Water is the best choice, but fluids from other sources (such as juices, herbal teas, and fruits and vegetables with high water content) can also help you stay hydrated.



Are Whole Body Deodorants Worth Trying?

Source: *Black Health Matters.com*®, by Fajr Eutsey

You may have noticed the influx of commercials and media coverage on whole-body deodorants. These products are precisely what their names allude to: they are designed to combat body odor in multiple areas. Even though we are primarily taught to put deodorant on our armpits, they are not the only parts of our bodies that can sweat and produce odor. Other body regions can produce sweat and body odor, such as the groin, feet, skin folds, thighs, pubic area, chest, and buttocks.

We decided to dive into the topic of whole-body deodorants and get professional guidance to help you determine if it is worth trying. We turned to a board-certified dermatologist and dermatologic surgeon, Dr. Brooke A. Jackson, for insight into whole-body deodorants.

BHM: On a molecular level, how do whole-body deodorants work?

Dr. Jackson: Let's discuss deodorant versus antiperspirant. Deodorants minimize odor through antibacterial properties and fragrance of some sort. Antiperspirants reduce sweat and odor. Often, chemicals such as aluminum are used to minimize sweat. Aluminum salts dissolve on your skin, blocking your pores from secreting sweat.

Over the past few years there has been some concern over the use of aluminum in antiperspirants as a potential link to cancer.

Because aluminum prevents you from sweating, some proponents of aluminum-free products believe that the action of aluminum-containing products that prevent you from sweating out toxins could eventually lead to cancer. Scientific evidence to support this claim is lacking.

According to the [American Cancer Society](#), no clear link between antiperspirants and breast cancer has been established, and breast cancer tissue has not been proven to contain higher concentrations of aluminum. Toxins are excreted from the body through the liver and the kidneys, not through sweat.

BHM: Are whole-body deodorants safe?

Dr. Jackson: Generally, yes, let's drill down on that. Most whole-body deodorants do not contain aluminum. However, they contain potential irritants such as fragrance, alcohol, and astringents, which change the skin's pH, making it less hospitable to odor-causing bacteria. Patients who have eczema or sensitive skin may find these products problematic. While aluminum absorption is minimal, the effect of whole-body aluminum-containing products has not been studied.

BHM: Can whole-body deodorant be used everywhere?

Dr. Jackson: Theoretically, yes, but practically, why would you need to? These products are not intended to be body lotions. The use should be limited to those areas on your body prone to odor or excessive sweat. These products are for external use only.

BHM: Are there any potential side effects of whole-body deodorants? If so, how can people reduce them?

Dr. Jackson: Alcohol, astringents, and fragrance can be issues. Approach with caution if you have sensitive skin

BHM: In your experience, are natural whole-body deodorants safer or more effective than their counterparts?

Dr. Jackson: natural deodorants often contain botanicals and fragrances, which can also be irritating.

BHM: Do you have any product recommendations for whole-body deodorants?

Dr. Jackson: Wear breathable wicking fabrics such as Coolmax, dri-fit, and Under Armor. Try going commando at night and maintain a healthy weight, as moisture, sweat, and bacteria tend to be more of an issue in those who are overweight.

If you are considering trying this new hygiene trend, look into our list of the top 3 whole-body deodorants.

1. Dove is our first choice as it promises freshness for up to 72 hours and prioritizes odor control and skin health. This whole-body deodorant can go beyond your underarms and even alleviate chafing. Infused with shea butter and vitamins B3 and E and coming in at \$11-\$13 1Dove's unscented whole-body deodorant could be perfect for you.



2. Lume is another versatile product for odor control, as it also guarantees 72 hours of protection. Depending on the type of formula, it can be found for \$20 or below; we suggest the unscented formula as it is free from essential oils and fragrance oils and fully embraces the aspects of its natural ingredients.

3. Next up, we have Native. This brand is quite famous for bringing natural alternatives to the deodorant aisles, but now, they have also joined the whole-body deodorant market.

According to their website, their unscented whole-body deodorant is clinically proven to provide 72 hours of protection. It is also made without aluminum, parabens, baking soda, or talc. For \$13, you can give Native a try.



25 Practical Ways You Can Show Your Grandchildren You Love Them

Source: *Crosswalk.com*

One of the best things in an older person's life is their grandchildren. I know so many people who are grandparents and are over the moon about their grandchildren. They like to spend as much time as possible with them and miss them if they live far away or aren't around as much. Of course, they love spoiling them; what grandparent doesn't? Still, there are some practical ways you can show your grands that you love them. Here are some ideas to show your love.

1. Spend Quality Time with Them. Spend some quality time with your grandchildren. By quality time, I mean doing something together where you interact and can have conversations. Make sure it's something you both enjoy, like going on a hike, doing a craft, or making a favorite dessert.

2. Write a Letter from the Heart. In this world of technology, sending your grandchildren a quick email or text is easy. Still, it isn't the most personal way to connect. Instead, sit down and take some time to write a heartfelt letter to your grandchildren. You can do this for a group and express your heartfelt love for all of them, or you can write each of them a letter individually to let them know how special they are and how much you love them. You can share your favorite memories with them, what you hope for them in the future, and your favorite qualities that they have. Your letter will become a cherished keepsake.

3. Make a Cookbook Together. Sit down and compile a cookbook together with your favorite family recipes. To make it even more special, hire someone to create a professional cover and format the interior. Then, upload it to Amazon and have it printed without publishing it. That way, you can print copies for friends and family without it being on sale to the public.

4. Make a Personalized Storybook. Sit down and write a story with your grandchildren about them and how special your bond is. Have them create the illustrations. Once again, to make it even more special, hire someone to create a professional cover for it and format the interior. Then, set up an Amazon KDP account and decide whether you want to publish it or not.

5. Plan a Special Date. Set up a day to go out, just you and your grandchildren. This could be a trip to the zoo, the children's museum, or even an amusement park or shopping complex. This will show them how much you love spending quality time with them.

6. Pray for Them. There is nothing more powerful than praying for your grandkids. Ask the Lord to help them, guide them, and guard them.

7. Pray with Them. Praying with them about things that are bothering them is another priceless way that you can show them you love them.

8. Cook Their Favorite Meals. Making their favorite meals is also a great way to show your love. Many times, there are dishes our grandmothers make that are hard to duplicate. We try to, but it's not quite the same. For me, it's my grandmother's buttermilk cookies. Food brings us together and is a great way to show your love.

- 9. Plan a Treasure Hunt.** Design a treasure hunt according to your grandchildren's interests. You can do this in your backyard or even in your home if it's raining.
- 10. Send a Care Package.** Do your grandchildren live far away, or are they at college or even in the military? Then, send them a care package with some of their favorite things and some handwritten notes. This will brighten their day and make them feel even more connected to you.
- 11. Make a Memory Book.** Gather your favorite memories via photo and use a site like Shutterfly to make a book. My best friend did this for me and my husband after our wedding. Your grandkids will love being able to look back at all the memories they have made with you and will cherish the book forever.
- 12. Have a Movie Night.** Have a movie night with your grandkids and snuggle up together with blankets and their favorite snacks. They will love spending time with you.
- 13. Actively Listen.** When you are talking with your grandkids, actively listen to them and ask questions to let them know you hear them and are paying attention.
- 14. Teach Them How to Do Something.** If you know a skill, trade, or have a favorite hobby, share that with your grandchildren. Teach them how to bake, change the oil in a car, and how to change a tire, or build something, for example. They will appreciate it later on in life.
- 15. Share Things with Them Every Day.** Share something fun with your grandkids every day. Send them a funny meme, share an article about something they like, or tell them about your day.
- 16. Have a Grandparent/Grandkids Camp.** Take a week in the summer and have your kids stay with you for "camp." Plan the activities and other things you will do together ahead of time.
- 17. Spend Time with Them One-On-One.** Take each of your grandkids out or have them over one at a time so you can spend some one-on-one time with them. This way, you can focus on them alone and not have to worry about the other children in your care. Your grandkids will feel special and loved by having this time with you.
- 18. Take Them to Practice and Activities.** If you can still drive, as your grandkids get older, offer to take them to after-school practices and activities. Your grandkids will love being picked up at school, and their parents will be very grateful for the help.
- 19. Send Them Mail.** Kids love getting mail, so send them something once a month. This could be a card, a letter, or even a special subscription box that correlates with one of their favorite interests.
- 20. Connect Weekly.** Make sure you connect with your grandkids on a weekly basis. This can be via email, text, face timing, or a phone call. Let them know their importance to you by carving out time for them every week.
- 21. Fly Them Out to See You.** If you have the means, monitor airfares and fly your grandchildren out to see you when you find a good price.

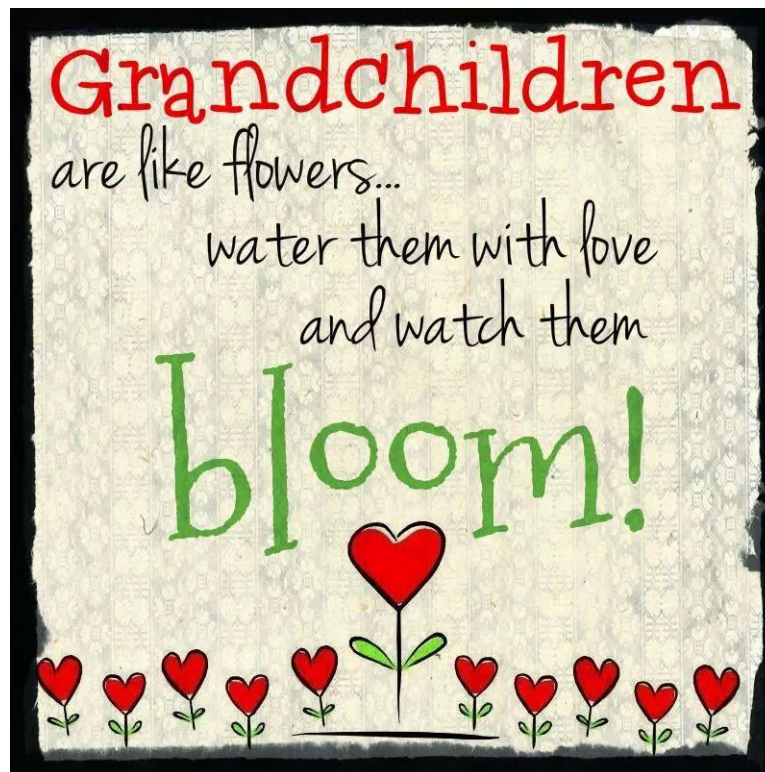
22. Share Cake on Everyone's Birthday. If you live far away, celebrate your grandkid's birthdays by baking a cake together via video chat. You can make a small cake while your grandchild and their parents can go whole hog on a two-tier, fully decorated cake. Make sure you bake and decorate your cake together via Facetime on your tablet or laptop if possible.

23. Record a Story. You can do this in several ways. Hallmark has recordable storybooks where you can read the story and it will record your voice. You can also record yourself reading it and send it to your grandkids on their phone. I read an article about a grandma who started her own YouTube channel, and she records herself reading storybooks to her grandchildren who live far away. I think this is very cool.

24. Go Visit. Once again, if you find cheap airfare, book a flight and visit your grandchildren. They will appreciate the time and effort it took to spend time with them.

25. Read a Book to Them. If you live close by, spend an afternoon reading their favorite books to them.

There are many practical ways you can spend time with your grandkids, both near and far, to show them you love them. Choose a few options from the list above and start planning how you are going to spend your time the next time you are together.



Birthdays

July	
Naomi Jones	2
Curtis Bell	4
Melani Finney	6
Brandi Walker	6
Asahni Proctor	7
Deborah Brown	9
Barbara Ligon	9
Lillie Clark	9
Elton Sherard	10
Phyllis Bell	13
Bill Porter	14
Anne Seymour	16
Brianna Pickerall	17
Rochelle Scott	18
Gaston Finney, Jr.	22
Allison Porter	23
James Pickett, Sr.	27
Wesley Brown	28
Rayonna Gibson	31
Corlissa Avery	31

August	
Kevin Jackson	1
Gloria Pickett	4
Kendall Harris	6
Victoria Jones	7
James Stemley	10
Sean Bowman	10
Jeffrey Miles, Sr.	26
Alex Porter	28
Juanita Williams	30
Joan Brown	30

September	
Mary Blackburn	3
Troy Booth	3
Brittani Walker	8
Griselda Clemons	12
Matthew S. Brown	16
Stacey Montgomery	19
Michelle Dixon	21
Terri Ware	21
Gaston Finney, III	24
Howard Branch	24
Carolyn Jackson	25
Winnifred Butler	25
Joan Harris	26
Joyce Stokes	27
Treasa Harris	28



Wedding Anniversaries



From The Newsletter Editor

4 Ways to Increase Your Joy While Serving Others

Becky Harling, Author

Serving others is foundational to a life of discipleship. However, often we view serving others as a “should” in our lives. As a result, our service lacks joy. We might need a change in perspective. The question is, how? Rather than seeing serving others as an “ought to” what if, we viewed it as an invitation from Jesus? The great news is this: With His invitation comes a promise. It’s the promise of joy.

What Does the Bible Say about Serving Others? While our culture views climbing the ladder as successful, Jesus offers a different perspective. At one point He told His disciples, “The greatest among you will be your servant” ([Matthew 23:11](#)). He placed a high value on His followers serving others.

What Is the Purpose of Serving Others? Scripture teaches the law of divine reciprocity. As you plant seeds of loving service and generosity, you will reap a harvest of abundance. Just as the ground only harvests what you planted, so in your relationships with others, what you sow, you will reap. The wise writer of Proverbs said it this way, “Whoever refreshes other will himself be refreshed” ([Proverbs 11:25](#)). When you invest your life in others serving and loving them like Jesus, you yourself will be well-loved and end up feeling more connected.

So, in the process of serving others, how do you increase your joy?

4 Ways to Increase Your Joy While Serving Others

1. Celebrate Connectedness. As human beings created in the image of God, we were designed to connect with others ([Genesis 1:26](#)). Just as the Godhead existed eternally in divine community, so we as humans are to enjoy community and connectedness with others. One of the greatest ways to increase your joy is to increase your connections. When we are linked to others, we know their needs and desires. When we serve them by meeting that need, it not only makes them feel more bonded but us as well. Whenever we serve others, we remind ourselves that we are part of a larger community and this increases our feelings of joy.

2. Offer Spontaneous Generosity. One of the greatest ways to increase your joy through serving others is to practice spontaneous generosity. During the past year, many not just here in the US but also globally have experienced increased anxiety, depression, and loneliness. When you spontaneously offer generosity to others, not only do you encourage their heart, but you also encourage your own. One easy way to do this is the next time you’re feeling heavy-hearted, spontaneously pay for the order of the person behind you when you go through a drive-through. Or, if you know someone in your network is struggling financially, drop off a gift card or bring a meal. It is such a joy when you realize that you are able to help meet the needs of others out of the overflow of how God has provided for you.

3. Serve out of the Uniqueness of Your Personality. The Apostle Paul reminds us in [Ephesians 2:10](#), that each of us is a unique poem written by God and designed to carry out good works that God has ordained beforehand. You have gifts and strengths that God intends for you to use when serving others. Don't try to be someone else. Serve out of *your* strengths and passions.

4. Respect Your Limits. Resentment creeps in when you serve out of exhaustion rather than out of the overflow of a full heart. Rather than serving out of a heart of love, we become tempted to serve out of a heart of guilt. I have seen this time and time again. People start out with great intentions. They start with love, but because they don't know their own limits, they serve till they're exhausted and resentful. This type of serving others becomes slavery and is not what Jesus intended.

Ask God to Increase Your Joy

When you feel your joy slipping ask God to fill you with renewed joy as you serve others. When the thought comes to offer spontaneous generosity, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with joy as you take care of the needs of others. When you are exercising your gifts, ask the Holy Spirit to increase your joy. As you faithfully ask and continue to serve, I believe God will answer your prayers. Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" ([Matthew 7:7](#)).



Sis. Ellalene Barnaby





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Bring love
wherever
you go.
Shine light
wherever
it's dark.
Leave blessings
wherever
you've been.
Be kind
wherever
you are.
mary davis

