

**THE NEWS**  
of  
**East Washington Heights Baptist Church**

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The FEAR of the  
LORD is the  
beginning of  
WISDOM.

Proverbs 9:10

## *The Pastor's Message*

### **Restoring Hope and Addressing the Crisis in the Village**

When it comes to the problems plaguing Black America often critics will say that the problems are rooted in the pathologies of urban Black culture, like crime, violence and out of wedlock births. Others place the blame solely on the door steps of broad socioeconomic factors like racism, poverty and unemployment. However, it is rare that one provides an honest, balanced assessment of what ails Black America, yet this is what Dr. Robert M. Franklin, former President of Atlanta's Morehouse College, does in his book entitled *Crisis in the Village: Restoring Hope in African American Communities*.

In this book, Dr. Franklin issues a call to strategic action to reverse the decline of families and children's well-being, the moral authority of churches, and the moral drift in many schools and colleges. Dr. Franklin's focus is rightly on the task of "child-making" because the future of Black children is at stake. Quoting statistics by Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund, he shares the following about Black children living in the U.S:

- Every five seconds during the school day, a Black public school student is suspended;
- Every forty-six seconds during the school day, a Black high school student drops out;
- Every minute, a Black child is arrested and a Black baby is born to an unmarried mother;
- Every three minutes, a Black child is born into poverty;
- Every hour, a Black baby dies;
- Every four hours, a Black child or youth under twenty dies from an accident;
- Every five hours, one is a homicide victim;
- Every day, a young Black person under twenty-five dies from HIV infection;
- A Black child or youth under twenty commits suicide.

Unfortunately, Marian Wright Edelman's timeline portrait of what's happening with Black children is a vivid reality in southeast Washington, DC. Too many of our young people are dying early and the prospects for their future are bleak. So what must we do to address the problem?

Dr. Franklin says that we must work to reverse the decline of core anchor institutions in the community. These institutions are the family, the church and the school. He points out that if these organizations were aligned, healthy and working together, our young people would flourish no matter what the state of the economy or who is in the Mayor's office or the White House.

In his study, Dr. Franklin says that Black families are suffering from a crisis of commitment. Indeed, Black marriage rates have declined significantly over the last several decades. According to a study done by Morehouse College, 80 percent of all African American children can expect to spend a significant part of their childhood living apart from their fathers. **Continued on Page 3**

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**Continued from Page 2** Children do best when both their fathers and mothers are involved in their lives. However, in order to make way for nurturing relationships between a father and his child, there is much to be done between fathers and mothers, men and women. Dr. Franklin says that despite the fact that urban mothers who attend church place a very high value on marriage, there appears to be an “African American faith and family paradox” that involves the coexistence of high rates of church attendance and unusually low rates of marriage. In spite of this, Franklin says that very few Black churches (only three percent) offer formal programs in marriage and parenting. Furthermore, only 5 percent offer programs targeting single-parents and singles and that more should do so.

Not only is there a crisis of commitment but Black churches face a Crisis of Mission. Dr. Franklin says the biggest threat is the “Prosperity Gospel movement.” This is a focus of the church on personal greed, obsessive materialism and unchecked narcissism. This stands counter to the social gospel tradition where the church is concerned about social justice and feeding hungry, and helping the prisoners, the sick and the poor. Franklin says that too many churches today are suffering from an “edifice” complex. They are spending more time building their buildings and local kingdoms when they should spend more time helping the downtrodden and working to ensure the future of our children.

Then finally our schools, according to Franklin, are suffering from a crisis of moral purpose. Franklin says that our schools are failing and that on a regular basis we are “reminded of the culture of violence, drug use, sexual experimentation and moral relativism plaguing many of our schools.” One of the answers to the problem is to foster collaborations with local schools and churches. To ask churches to incorporate educational excellence into their ministries and become centers of educational support. These centers would offer after-school programs, mentoring, tutoring, computer resources, and assistance with standardized tests and college preparation.

Dr. Franklin has issued a strong call for us to restore hope in the community by making our families, our church and neighborhood schools stronger. Let each of us do what we can in our own realms of influence and collectively as the East Washington Heights Baptist Church to heed the call. Peace and Blessings. **\_\_Pastor Kip Banks, Sr.**

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*Happy Birthday to all who were born in April!*

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*Happy Anniversary to all who were married in April!*

# THE NEWS

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## Fools for Christ

April Fools' Day isn't a religious holiday, though it may date to Pope Gregory XIII and his new calendar. In 1582, he shifted New Year's Day from April to January, and people who didn't believe the change were called April fools.

April Fools' Day may also be connected to the lightheartedness that comes with warmer weather, as well as to medieval Christian festivals that involved pranks, disguises and a temporarily inverted social order.

Yet, in Scripture, such reversal characterizes the kingdom of God. In 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, St. Paul writes that the gospel seems foolish to people who don't know Christ, that God uses the "foolishness of our proclamation" to offer salvation to all and that God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. Jesus "foolishly" inverted the social order, saying the last will be first and the first, last.

So if on April 1 — and every day — we live as "fools for Christ," we're precisely what he calls us to be!

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## Healing and community

In [the] healing texts, Jesus does not just cure people's diseases and cast out their demons and then say, "Mission accomplished." He's always after something more than that because the healing is never fully accomplished until there is a restoration to community. People are healed of disease, and then he tells the folks just standing around watching to go get them something to eat. The widow's son is raised from the dead and then [Jesus] gives him back to his mother. And ... the man healed of demons is then told to stay with his people and speak of what God has done. In the Jesus business, community is always a part of healing, even though community is never perfect.

Nadia Bolz-Weber, *Accidental Saints*

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## Find rest

I have read in Plato and Cicero sayings that are wise and very beautiful; but I have never read in either of them: Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. St. Augustine

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A hen is the only creature that can sit around and still be productive.

# THE NEWS

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## His Glory"

God sends rainbows after showers  
arching 'cross the freshened skies.  
Every rainbow shows God's glory.  
Every wonder tells his story.

God sends Jesus down from heaven  
offering mercy, hope and life.  
On the cross he showed God's glory.  
Every blessing tells his story.

God sends me forth into this world  
sharing love that offers life.  
And I hope to show God's glory  
In the way I tell his story. \_\_MaryAnn Sundby

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## A love explosion

"Mommy, if Jesus comes to live inside my heart, will I explode?" One of missionary Katie Davis' adopted daughters surprised her with that question as they headed to the Nile River for some baptisms.

Although Davis immediately replied, "No!" she later realized: "That is exactly what we should do if Jesus comes to live inside our hearts. We will explode with love, with compassion, with hurt for those who are hurting, and with joy for those who rejoice. We will explode with a desire to be more, to be better, to be close to the One who made us." \_\_adapted from *Kisses From Katie*

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## Avoiding temptation

Our 10-year-old loves playing on his father's tablet but may use only the touch screen because he's misused the keyboard and stylus. One day, after receiving permission to play, he detached and handed over the forbidden objects. His dad said, "Just leave them there," but our son replied, "No, I might be tempted to use them."

We routinely pray, "Lead us not into temptation," hoping God will almost magically keep us out of trouble even as we stray close to enticements: We buy high-calorie treats while intending to "eat healthy." We visit big-box stores and spend money we don't have. We gather with gossipy friends, fully aware that such talk is sinful and harmful.

Perhaps we should be more proactive about removing temptations. Perhaps "Lead me not into temptation" means "God, help me keep *myself* away from that which tempts me toward poor choices." Amen! \_\_Heidi Mann

# THE NEWS

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## A shepherd's role

While traveling in Iran, writer Eric Bishop asked a villager about an earthen enclosure topped with dry thorns. The man said sheep stayed in the round space at night for safety. "What are the thorns for?" Bishop asked. "If a wolf tries to break in and attack the sheep," the man replied, "he'll knock against the thorns, and they'll make a noise, and the shepherd will wake up and drive off the wolf."

Pointing out the enclosure's doorless entrance, Bishop asked why a wolf wouldn't just enter there. Because, replied the villager, "that's where the shepherd sleeps; the shepherd is the door."

Suddenly Bishop understood why in John 10 Jesus calls himself first the door, or gate, for the sheep and then the Good Shepherd. Because Jesus is the shepherd, he's also the door that keeps us, his sheep, safe within his care.

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## Singing in church

Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sang the songs of Satan. Sing modestly. Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony; but strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear melodious sound.

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## Jesus Is Our Cheat Sheet

Steve Winger from Lubbock, Texas, writes about his last college test, a final in a logic class known for its difficult exams:

To help us on our test, the professor told us we could bring as much information to the exam as we could fit on a piece of notebook paper. Most students crammed as many facts as possible on their 8-1/2 x 11 inch sheet of paper. But one student walked into class, put a piece of notebook paper on the floor, and had an advanced logic student stand on the paper.

The advanced logic student told him everything he needed to know. He was the only student to receive an "A." The ultimate final exam will come when we stand before God and he asks, "Why should I let you in?" On our own we cannot pass that exam. Our creative attempts to earn eternal life fall far short. But we have Someone who will stand in for us. *—Leadership, Vol. 15, no. 4.*

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*"If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

**John 15: 7, 8**

# THE NEWS

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## The friendly church

- ✚ A friendly church is one where worshipers greet one another warmly and sincerely before and after the service.
  - ✚ A friendly church is one where members seek out newcomers and make them feel welcome and important. Visitors hear that the congregation can help meet various needs: spiritual nourishment, Christian education, fellowship, friendship, service opportunities, support and comfort during difficulties and more.
  - ✚ A friendly church has something for everyone. It becomes a loving home where people desire to return frequently for spiritual, social, physical and emotional support.
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## Building a church

Computer programmer Amy Hughes found a unique way to express her faith. The Lego enthusiast built a church out of 75,000 Lego pieces.

The church is about 7' by 5 1/2' and seats 1,372 little Lego people. The building has almost 4,000 windows, mosaics, an altar and crucifix, a pulpit, a detailed pipe organ, a narthex, bathrooms, stairs and a balcony that seats an 80-member choir. Photos are posted at [www.amyhughes.org/lego/church](http://www.amyhughes.org/lego/church).

Hughes, who once dreamed of being an architect, spent a year and a half on her project, dubbed the Abston Church of Christ. ("Abston" is a fictional name derived from ABS, the type of plastic used to make Legos.)

She also used the Lego church as an exercise in sermon-writing. Pondering why people seek refuge in a house of God, Hughes writes, "The Lord is here because we are here, not because we built a beautiful building."

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matthew 18:20, NRSV).

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## The investor

Two old friends met one day after many years apart.

One man asked, "How has everything been going with you?"

"Well, I used to be as rich as Bill Gates," replied the second man.

"Wow! How did you manage that?" asked his stunned friend.

"One day I opened the Bible at random, closed my eyes and dropped my finger on a word. The word was 'oil.' So I invested in oil, and boy, did the oil wells gush! Then another day I dropped my finger on a different word in the Bible, and it was 'gold.' So I invested in gold, and those mines really produced!"

"Amazing! But you said you 'used to be as rich as Bill Gates.'"

"Yeah, I lost it all. One day I closed my eyes and pointed at a page. When I opened my eyes, my finger rested on the words 'Chapter Eleven.'"



# PUZZLE

## A SPECIAL GIFT

Give thanks to God for this amazing planet, which he filled with people, animals and plants.

*Directions: Following the code below, fill in the blanks to complete the Bible verse. Then color the earth.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z



The \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_, and  
 \_\_\_\_\_, the  
 \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 24:1, NIV  
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Answer: The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Psalm 24:1, NIV