

God's plan *for* SAVING PEOPLE

In a nutshell, people receive salvation when they turn to God with all their heart, soul, mind, and will, asking God to save them. But let's break that process down.

Why We Need God's Salvation

The Bible teaches that all persons are sinners and are out of fellowship with God because our original parents (Adam and Eve) sinned; and that original sin has passed from one generation to another and from one person to another (see Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:23; 5:12). Of course, we're also sinners because we sin every time we think or act contrary to God's perfect holy will. The consequence of being sinners is that we are out of favor with God—both now and forever (John 3:36).

What God Has Done

The good news is that God has done something to bring us back into favor and fellowship with Himself. He sent His only Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole world. Jesus, the Christ, said He "came . . . to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). God shows His approval of His Son's atoning death by raising Him from the dead (Romans 1:4).

What We Must Do

God has made provision for our salvation. Our part is to turn to Him in faith and accept His death upon the cross as payment for our sins. By turning to God in repentance and faith, the broken relationship between God and us is healed. In turning to Him, we acknowledge our sinfulness and turn away from sin. This is called repentance. Romans 10:9 reads, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." By accepting Jesus into one's heart, a person is "born again," or born from above (John 3:3), and becomes a member of God's special family—the church.

Jesus said that persons who accept Him should be baptized as a public confession of their decision to accept Him (Matthew 28:19). In the book of Acts, when people accepted Christ, they joined with other believers in the fellowship of the church, where they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship with other believers, to the breaking of bread (communion), and to prayer. These disciplines help believers to strengthen their faith and deepen their relationship with God.



adinkra SYMBOLS

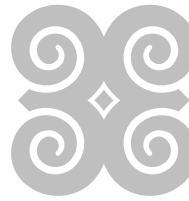
Each of the features of the *Men of Color Study Bible* has been illustrated with an adinkra symbol. These African symbols can be traced back to the Asante people of Ghana and the Gyaman people of Cote d' Ivoire. Each symbol is derived from the history, philosophy, or religious beliefs of these people. Here are the meanings to the symbols used in the features of the *Men of Color Study Bible*:



Steadfast Scriptures
Authority and Justice



Bible Basics
Belief and Reliance on God



Men in the Bible
Humility and Strength



Targeting
Greatness



Black Presence
Brotherhood and Security



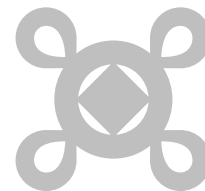
From the Pastor's Pen
Endurance in Hardship



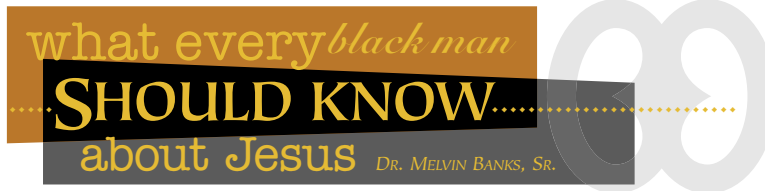
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The Soul, Purity, and Spirituality



Jesus was born in Africa

Unlike what you may think, to be precise, Jesus was born in North Africa, but Africa nonetheless. Palestine, the birthplace of Jesus, is located on the northeastern tip of the continent of Africa. He was born in an area where the people were either African or Asiatic. Both of these groups were some shade of black. That point having been made, Jesus is not only interested in people of color. He is interested in everybody. However, that point is made to show that Jesus was not the blue-eyed, blond-haired person so often portrayed by European and American artists. His blood line, recorded in Matthew chapter one, included people descended from Ham whose very name means, “black,” or burnt face.”

Jesus was more than a Man

Jesus was born to a virgin impregnated by God, the Holy Spirit, without the aid of a human father. Some people stumble at the idea of anyone being born into this world without a human father, and apart from Jesus’ birth that is entirely true. The Bible reveals that Jesus’ birth was different (see Matthew 1:20–21). His birth was miraculous. He was God in the flesh. He was the God-man. We are told by one writer (the apostle John) that Jesus existed “in the beginning with God,” but came to live among us to reveal God to us, to tell us what God wanted us to know, and to give His life for us (John 1:1–2, 14, 18).

Jesus was visited by the Magi

(Matthew 2:1–13a)

Shortly after He was born, wise men from the “east” came to visit Jesus, and brought Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh—gifts worthy of a royal king. According to some scholars, the word, “east,” does not mean east as we know it but, “from a long distance.” Since the gifts brought were gifts more commonly found in Sheba, southern Arabia, it could be that the wise men were really from Africa.

Jesus was hidden in Africa

(Matthew 2:13b–18)

After the wise men left, Joseph was instructed by an angel to flee to Egypt to protect Jesus from the reach of King Herod who was determined to kill the new child, fearing that a new king would be a threat to his own kingship. Mary and Joseph immediately went to Egypt. Some scholars have observed that only if Jesus was a person of color could He hide among dark-skinned Egyptians. When King Herod died, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus



returned to Galilee where they lived until Jesus began His ministry at the approximate age of 30.

Jesus faced strong temptations and won

(Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-12)

When the time was right for Jesus to begin His work, He showed up at John's baptism to be baptized. Following the baptism, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness of Judea where Satan tempted Him. Three times Satan attempted to bring Jesus down with temptations: In the first temptation Satan asked Jesus to turn stones into bread to satisfy His need for food. Jesus resisted by quoting the Scripture, which says people are not sustained by bread only, but by every word of God. In other words, Jesus tells the devil, "Why should I turn stones into bread, surrendering Myself to your control, when bread isn't what's really keeping Me alive anyway. God's Word is what sustains me."

The second temptation was a solicitation by Satan for Jesus to jump off the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem. Evidently Satan wanted Jesus to fall for the gimmick of doing something spectacular to get attention for His ministry. Or, if God chose not to protect Him and He killed Himself, at least He would no longer be a threat to Satan's rule! Jesus quoted to Satan the Scripture which says we should never put God to a foolish test.

The third test was for Jesus to bow in worship and submission to Satan. The devil promised Him all the kingdoms of the world in return for Jesus' worship. To this Jesus angrily told Satan to get lost because God is the only Person to be worshiped and served. The secret of Jesus' victory over Satan was His trust in the authority and reliability of God's revealed Word. Likewise, the secret of our success over Satan's temptation will be our knowledge of and trust in God's revealed Word, the Bible.

Jesus was no sissy

(Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:14-20; Luke 5:2-8)

Anybody who thinks Christianity is for sissies and weak people has a distorted understanding of Jesus. The first disciples He called were fishermen. These were strong, tough men who had spent their lives pulling huge nets full of fish and rowing heavy boats on turbulent seas. When He was starting out in His work, Jesus invited these tough men to leave their regular work and let Him teach them a thing or two. "Come follow Me," Jesus said, "and I'll show you how to catch people."

Jesus is still not satisfied with people who are only interested in resting. He wants men who are willing to roll up their sleeves and help Him complete the work He started. It's true that He gives rest or refreshment of the body and spirit to those who are weary. But that's to get themselves fit to serve Him!

Jesus was a "take-charge" kind of a person

(Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37)

Jesus went into the synagogue to teach. While He was teaching, this demon-possessed man interrupted His teaching session by screaming at the top of his voice, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth?"

“Shut up and come out of him” commanded Jesus. And immediately the demon shut up and came out after shaking the man violently. Jesus took charge of the situation, so much so, that the people were amazed. A “take-charge” kind of Jesus is someone we can admire and follow. He knows who He is and what He is about.

Jesus knew the source of His power

(Mark 1:35–39; Luke 4:42–43)

He got up “very early” in the morning and spent time in prayer to His Father. Sometimes, when you’re busy all day, the best time to pray is early in the morning. Whether we pray morning, noon, or night, we must do it if we don’t want to be weak and powerless.

Jesus identified character traits that lead to success

(Matthew 5:1–11)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus identified character traits in people that God blesses. They include

1. those who are poor enough in spirit to know they need God;
2. those who mourn over sin in their lives;
3. those who are gentle and lowly in their relationship with God rather than cocky and “know it all”;
4. those who hunger and thirst for justice in society;
5. those who show mercy to others;
6. those whose hearts are pure;
7. those who work for peace;
8. those who are faithful to God even when they are persecuted;
9. those who endure mockery and false accusations because of their identification with God.

For every virtue, God promises a rich reward. Success by any other definition is hollow.

Jesus told us how to cope with anger and revenge

(Matthew 5:21–26, 38–48)

Anger is the displeasure we all feel when someone has mistreated us. If it is not controlled, it can result in a desire for revenge. The natural response to being treated unjustly is to get even. Jesus taught that in the society He is establishing, anger is on a par with murder and can lead to judgment. He advises people who are angry to seek reconciliation with the person causing the displeasure. Leave your gift at the altar and go be reconciled to the person. Try to repair the breach before it goes to court. Rather than seeking revenge, be willing to take wrong. It seems that taking wrong is intended to be the *personal* response when we are treated unfairly. However, in respect to wrongs done to *others*, we are told to seek justice for them (see Matthew 5:6). Additionally, we are instructed to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute and misuse us. In so doing, we are acting as true children of God who sends rain on the just and the unjust.

Admittedly, this is one of the toughest and most revolutionary statements Jesus made. Jesus Himself is the most perfect example of this principle. He never retaliated against wrongs done to Him. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is perhaps the best modern example. He did not seek personal



revenge when the dogs and fire hoses were unleashed on him. He put himself in great danger to achieve justice for others. He demonstrated that turning the other cheek and passive resistance can be more powerful in achieving lasting results than seeking revenge.

Jesus warned us about adultery

(Matthew 5:27-30; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20)

Adultery destroys relationships. It produces unwanted children and creates an atmosphere where neither married partners nor children can develop into whole persons. Jesus taught that not only is it wrong to break the marriage vow by going to bed with someone you're not married to, but it is also wrong to look at a woman with lust in your heart.

Jesus healed with power and compassion

(Matthew 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-14)

This leper came begging Jesus to heal him. Leprosy was something like AIDS because if you were not careful you could catch it. Still, Jesus touched this man to show His compassion, then healed him. Strong people can show compassion without lowering their dignity, and compassion is what the world needs.

Jesus healed and forgave

(Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:18-26)

Jesus was confronted by a man who had two problems—he needed healing *and* forgiveness. Jesus gave him both. Onlookers were baffled and upset because they knew that only God could forgive sins. To show the magnitude of His power and ability to forgive, Jesus commanded the paralytic to pick up his bed and go home. Yes, Jesus *can* forgive sins, and will do so when we come to Him in repentance.

Jesus mixed with sinners

(Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32)

Jesus didn't hesitate to go where sinners were. He fraternized with the outcasts—sinners and tax collectors. Of course, He did not do what sinners do. But He knew that in order to catch fish you have to use the right bait. And for Jesus, the right bait was going where the sinners were. In doing so, He showed that He cared about people and understood their needs.

Jesus answered His critics

(Matthew 12:25-39; Mark 3:20-30; Luke 11:17-22)

Jesus was accused of driving out demons by the power of Satan. To answer His critics He asked, "How can Satan drive out Satan? A house divided against itself will never stand." Any dummy should be able to understand that. Some people today attempt to use the same kind of illogical reasoning when they are confronted with the claims of Christ. They try to say that all the "God talk" and all the supernatural claims of Christ are fake or unsubstantiated. They can only say that because *they* have never *experienced* Jesus and *discovered for themselves* how real He is.

Jesus warned us to check ourselves before we wreck ourselves

(Matthew 13:1-15; Mark 4:1-20; 8:4-15)

Jesus used a parable to explain how people would respond to His message. He said that people's hearts are like various kinds of soil. Some hearts are hard. When they hear God's message, they dismiss it immediately. Satan takes it away from them. Some like what they hear, but it doesn't last. As soon as trouble comes, they quickly fall away. Some like the message, but they are so taken up with "wine, women, music, and money," that they don't have time for God. The message does them no good either. Still others hear the Word of God and accept it. Jesus said these last ones are the ones who produce the kind of life that pleases God.

Jesus encouraged faith to cope with unexpected experiences

(Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25)

Jesus and His disciples were crossing the lake in a boat when suddenly they were confronted by a furious storm. Jesus was sleeping peacefully on a cushion. The disciples woke Him up and said, "Don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and waves saying, "Quiet! Be still!" Then He asked the disciples, "Why are you so afraid?"

Life is full of the unexpected. A pink slip at the job. A sick child. An automobile accident.

In times like these, Jesus asks, "Where is your faith?" The question is intended to encourage us to rely upon Him for wisdom to know what to do, and strength to do it.

Demons were no problem for Jesus

(Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39)

This man with many demons living inside him came running to Jesus. He needed help because the demons controlled him, forcing him to live in the cemetery and cut himself with stones. Demons inside the man made him so strong, nothing could hold him. He was desperate for help.

No problem! Jesus cast out the demons, sending them away into a herd of pigs. The man was healed and his mind restored. We can take from this at least one point: if Jesus can cure a man with "many" demons, He can surely take care of our situation.

A little in Jesus' hands became much

(Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:5-13)

Jesus used the lunch of a small boy—five loaves and two fish—to feed 5,000 hungry men, plus all the women and children who were also hungry! How did it happen? The little boy gave Jesus what he had—his lunch. Jesus took *what the little boy gave Him*, multiplied it, and fed the multitude. What's the point? When we give what we possess to Jesus—our abilities, money, time, ourselves, etc.—He takes what we give Him, multiplies it, and uses it to "feed" the multitudes around us. And like the little boy who must have been filled with joy at what his lunch had done, we will be



filled with joy and satisfaction when we see the results of what our little can accomplish in the hands of Jesus.

Jesus unmasked the hypocrites

(Matthew 5:1–20; Mark 7:1–23)

Jesus couldn't stand hypocrites—those people who paraded publicly as holy and righteous, but in private were crooked and wicked. The Pharisees washed their hands in public to show how holy they were, but inside their hearts, they were filled with greed, injustice, immorality, and a lot of other corruption. They found a way to neglect their parents by claiming that gifts that should have gone to take care of their parents could be dedicated to God. What they likely did was to use the “dedicated gifts” for themselves. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for neglecting the commands of God by holding onto their traditions. He stressed that *inner* righteousness is critical to being accepted by God, the ultimate Judge. Inner righteousness can only be achieved through a relationship with God, which comes when we accept Jesus the Christ as our Savior.

Jesus was a Mentor

(Matthew 16:13–20; Mark 8:27–29; Luke 19:18–20)

Jesus preached to crowds, performed miracles, and did a lot of things in public. But, He spent a lot of time in private with His disciples, getting them ready for the time when He would leave them. He *mentored* them, which means He acted as a Friend and Counselor to them; advising, training, encouraging, shaping their thinking. How pleased Jesus was that day when Peter, having finally gotten the message, declared, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” With that confession, Jesus knew He was making progress in communicating who He is to His disciples. Jesus left us a Mentor, the Holy Spirit (John 14:15–16, 25–27). The Holy Spirit teaches, encourages, and empowers us to fulfill God's purposes for us, including our becoming mentors of others.

God affirmed the identity of Jesus

(Matthew 17:1–13; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36)

Jesus took His disciples to the top of a high mountain for a very special experience. While there He was transfigured before them, that is, His likeness changed. He glowed. Moses who had been given God's laws and, Elijah, who was representative of all the prophets, appeared with Him. Their presence could have been to emphasize that Jesus was a fulfillment of all they had done to communicate God's will to humans. The voice the disciples heard left no doubt concerning Jesus' identity. The voice (obviously that of God the Father) said, “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” Peter, James, and John were eyewitnesses of this heavenly transfiguration. Their testimonies cannot be ignored. Jesus is God's unique Son, and we must *listen* to Him.

Jesus taught how to be truly great

(Matthew 18:1–5; Mark 9:33–37; Luke 9:46–48)

It's funny how Jesus turns the world's wisdom upside down. The disciples were arguing about who was the greatest. They, like most people, thought

that greatness is measured by how much power and prestige you have, how many people you control, how popular you are, or how much money you have. Jesus said, in so many words, “You’ve got it all backwards. Greatness is measured by how low you are willing to bend in order to serve others.” Then, using a child as an example, He explained that when you welcome children, you are in reality welcoming Jesus. And in welcoming Jesus, you are welcoming God who sent Jesus. He went on to say (Mark 9: 42) that if anyone was contemplating causing a child to sin they would be better off letting someone drown them in the sea rather than face the punishment they will get for causing that child to sin! Strange how people down here have greatness all twisted up!

Jesus taught about divorce

(Matthew 19:1-9; Mark 10:1-12)

This question was put to Jesus by some Pharisees who apparently were trying to trap Jesus so that they could accuse Him of contradicting the Law of Moses. Jesus elicited from them that Moses permitted divorce, based on Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Then he explained that Moses, because of our degenerate hearts, permitted divorce in order to help protect the interest of the wife. Divorce was God’s *permissive* will. God’s *perfect* will is that a husband and wife would remain together for the duration of their lives. Our goal should be to strive for God’s perfect will.

Jesus taught about money

(Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30)

While Jesus was walking along a young man ran up to Him and fell prostrate before the Lord. The man was *young*—he had youthful energy. He was *rich*—he had resources to spare. He was a *ruler*—he possessed power. But he was unfulfilled! He wanted to know from Jesus how to be sure of eternal life. He claimed he had kept all the Commandments. Jesus, however, knowing the status of his heart, put His finger on the man’s problem: his love of money was keeping him from dedicating himself to God and God’s concerns—the poor. When Jesus put His finger on the man’s greed, the poor guy went away sad. Did Jesus say, “Hey wait, don’t leave; we need your money?” No, because Jesus does not compromise God’s righteous standards. Neither should we.

Jesus predicted His own death

(Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-33)

Three times before it happened Jesus warned His disciples of His impending death. No doubt one reason He did so was to prepare them for what to expect. By telling them in advance, He hoped that they would not be shocked and conclude that He was not who He said He was. But perhaps another reason was to demonstrate to them how a person dedicated to the cause of God’s program ought to remain steadfast until the job is complete, despite the difficulties they might encounter along the way. Of course, we are not Jesus, but He is our best and most perfect example of what God desires of His children.



Jesus offered Himself as King

(Matthew 12:1–9; Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:29–38; John 12:12–15)

Jesus knew that He was the fulfillment of many prophecies and promises that God would send the Anointed One (Messiah) to bring deliverance to Israel and salvation to the entire human race. In fulfillment of one of those prophecies, Jesus offered Himself to the nation as their long-awaited Messiah (Zech. 9:9). Zechariah predicted that He would come in peace by riding on a donkey (a conqueror would ride a horse). Instead of welcoming Him, the leaders of Israel rejected and crucified Him. Yet, in the sovereign plan of God, His death became the means of salvation for all who receive Him as Savior. John wrote, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:11–12).

Jesus confronted the religious “system”

(Matthew 21:10–17; Mark 11:12–19; Luke 19:45–47)

The authorities had turned the temple into a place of business. The traders were making huge profits from the exchange of money and from overcharging the people for animals, spices, salt, oil, and wine used in sacrifices. The temple had become a “den of robbers.” Worship was secondary. In keeping with His authority as God’s anointed, Jesus cleaned house, overturning tables and chasing out traders and animals. This infuriated the authorities and was one of the primary reasons they decided Jesus had to die. Jesus confronted a broken system head-on. But, then He paid a price—His life! The tactics we use to confront a broken system will probably differ from those the Lord used. We can use the ballot box, involvement in government or social agencies, and participation in church and community activities to make a difference in our world.

Jesus clarified our duty to government

(Matthew 22:15–22; Mark 12:13–17; Luke 20:20–26)

The religious leaders thought that they could trap Jesus into denying any duty to pay taxes or support of government. Their intent was to get the Roman government to condemn and kill Him so they would not have to do it. Jesus saw through their scheme. Pointing to an image of Caesar on a coin, He told them to fulfill their duty to government and their duty to God. Since the image of God is stamped within every individual (from God we get our body, mind, emotions, and will), we owe loyalty to God. In our society, we can work to right the wrongs of government, but we owe government our support for protection and justice.

Jesus clarified our main duty on earth

(Matthew 22:34–40; Mark 12:28–34)

A man came to Jesus one day wanting to know the most important commandments God had given. Jesus identified two: The most important one: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second is this: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” When we truly love God, we want to know

more about Him, we long to worship Him, we desire to tell others about Him. When we love people, we will be kind to them, help them, want justice for them, and more.

Jesus promised to return to earth

(Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)

Jesus made it clear that after His Resurrection and Ascension to heaven that He would return to the earth with power and great glory. He identified a number of signs that would precede His appearance. He revealed that at His return He would send His angels to gather His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens. He made clear that no one knows the day or hour of His return, so everyone should remain alert and on guard.

The religious leaders plotted to do away with Jesus

(Matthew 26:2-16; Mark 14:1-11; Luke 22:1-6; John 12:1-8)

Envy and jealousy drove the religious leaders to plot Jesus' arrest and Crucifixion. Just after He was anointed with perfume in Bethany, Judas Iscariot went to the religious leaders and promised to deliver Jesus to them at the appropriate time. Why did Judas betray Jesus? Several suggestions have been put forth: Perhaps he anticipated a crack down by the authorities and wanted to endear himself to the leaders in advance; perhaps he was disillusioned when Jesus did not seize power; perhaps he just wanted to make some money. John clearly says he was a thief (John 12:6). We know that Satan entered Judas and used him to commit the dastardly deed. Whatever the motive, Judas went to the religious leaders and they promised him money for delivering Jesus to them.

Jesus spent quality time with His disciples before His death

(Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23; John 13-14)

Aware that He was about to die, Jesus arranged a time of privacy with His disciples in the Upper Room. In this quiet and secluded place, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Following the washing, Jesus explained to them that after He was gone people would know they belonged to Him by the way they loved and cared for each other. He then ate His last meal with the disciples. This was followed by His institution of the Last Supper, which Christians celebrate today in remembrance of His death and Resurrection. He predicts His betrayal by Judas and denial by Peter. He comforts the disciples and promises them the Holy Spirit, telling them that the Comforter/Counselor would live within them and never leave them. The Holy Spirit would reveal truth to them, guide and empower them to complete the work assigned to them.

As they left the Upper Room, they headed for the Garden of Gethsemane. On the way, Jesus took time to point out that the secret of bearing fruit which the Father was very interested in having them produce, was in remaining connected to Him, the True Vine.



Jesus sweated blood while praying in Gethsemane

(Matthew 26:36–46; Mark 14:32–42; Luke 22:40–46)

When Jesus arrived at the garden with His disciples, He requested them to pray with Him because He knew the pain and suffering that was just ahead. He went forward, fell on His face, and prayed so intensely that He sweated blood (Luke 22:44). Throughout His career on earth, Jesus repeatedly made clear that His mission was to fulfill the purpose for which He had come—to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Offering up His life was the greatest challenge of His career. The flesh cringed at the thought of the suffering, but His inner self was determined to finish His mission. That determination brought an angel from heaven to strengthen Him to complete the task. After the third prayer, He could say confidently, “Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

Jesus was arrested

(Matthew 26:47–67)

Just as Jesus was finishing His prayer, Judas arrived with soldiers sent from the chief priests and elders. Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. The soldiers arrested Jesus, took Him to the high priest and the rest of the religious leaders. They interrogated Him. After He acknowledged that He was the Messiah, they condemned Him to death and escorted Him to Pilate for sentencing since it was against Roman law for them to put a person to death.

Pilate sentenced Jesus to death

(Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 22:66—23:56; John 18—19)

Pilate examined Jesus but found no cause to put Him to death. Yet, to please the religious leaders and to avoid any criticism by the Roman emperor, Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified. The soldiers mocked Him by dressing Jesus in purple (the color of royalty), struck Him on the head, spit on Him, paid “homage” to Him by falling on their knees in mock worship. Then they took off His robe and led Him out to Calvary for the Crucifixion.

On the way to Calvary, the soldiers recruited Simon from the African country of Cyrene to carry His cross. By 9:00 A.M., Jesus was on the cross. From 12:00 noon to 3:00 P.M., darkness came over the scene, at which time Jesus cried, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me.” He then cried with a loud voice and breathed His last. At that moment the temple curtain, which separated people from the Most Holy section, was split in two from top to bottom. This symbolized that any and all people now have access to a holy God because of the perfect sacrifice Jesus made on behalf of all people. Joseph of Arimathea requested and got permission from Pilate to remove the body of Jesus. He placed the body into a tomb cut from a rock and a stone was rolled in front of the tomb.

Jesus arose from the dead

(Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20)


On the first day of the week following the Crucifixion, women arrived at the tomb to discover the stone was rolled away. Jesus had arisen. He made

numerous appearances to individuals and groups of persons, giving ample proof that it was, indeed, He who had risen from the dead. From time immemorial all over the world testimonies by credible witnesses have been used to establish the veracity of claims. Jesus' Resurrection has been firmly established. Additionally, the transformation of lives and personal witnesses by people upon whom the risen Savior has had an impact is further proof of His being alive. Perhaps that testimony of the praying sister is worth repeating. She said, "I know He's alive, because I just spoke to Him this morning!"





biographies of CONTRIBUTORS



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Dr. Willard Walden Christopher Ashley, Sr., is the founder and Senior Pastor of the Abundant Joy Christian Center in Jersey City, New Jersey. He is also a pastoral psychotherapist at the Riverside Church of New York City and the Montclair Counseling Center in Upper Montclair, New Jersey. He is a graduate of the Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Massachusetts, where he earned his Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees. He is also a graduate of the Blanton Peale Graduate Institute with a certificate in Marriage and Family Therapy.

Rev. Dr. Arthur C. Banks has been pastoring the Eastside Baptist Church for over thirteen years. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Education, a Master of Arts in Christian Ministry, and a Doctorate in Ministry from Faith Evangelical Lutheran Seminary. He has served as the President of the North Pacific Baptist Convention for the past four years.

Dr. Melvin E. Banks, Sr., serves as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Urban Ministries, Inc. (UMI), which he founded in 1970. Under his direction, UMI has grown to be one of the leading publishers of Christian education resources for churches in the African-American community. He graduated from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and went on to Wheaton College to earn the Bachelor of Arts, the Bachelor of Arts in Theology, and the Master of Arts degrees. He also received the Doctorate of Literature from the same institution in 1992. He is the author of the book *Winning and Keeping Teens in Church*. In addition, he is the founder of Urban Outreach, an organization that conducts leadership training institutes. He is a board member of Wheaton College and the Circle Y Ranch, a summer camp for children and youth. In addition, he serves as an elder in his church. Dr. Banks lives in South Holland, Illinois, with his wife, Olive. They have three children: Melvin, Jr., Patrice, and Reginald.

Rev. Donald L. Bean, Jr., graduated from Ohio State University, where he majored in political science. There he answered a call to preach and was licensed to preach by the New Salem Missionary Baptist Church. He studied at the Jerusalem Center for Biblical Studies in Jerusalem, Israel, and also received a Master of Divinity from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. While attending seminary, he served as an associate minister at the Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church, where he interned as a youth minister and taught in the Christian Education department. He has also served as program director for the New Salem Community Reinvestment Corporation, where he did program development, management, fundraising, and grant writing. Currently he serves as Director of Maturity and oversees ministries that aid the congregation to grow toward spiritual maturity. He is married to Cathy, and they are the proud parents of David Michael.

Rev. Dale C. Bronner, Sr., is a graduate of Morehouse College. He is presently working towards his Doctor of Ministry degree from Christian Life School of Theology. He serves on the Board of Directors for Kingdom Vision Network and the Board of Governors for the Christian Men Network and is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors. He also serves on the Board of Directors and is part-owner of Bronner Brothers Manufacturing Company. He is the founder and Senior Pastor of Word of Faith Family Worship Center. He is a contributing writer for *Man Power* and *Failure: The Womb of Success* and is the author of *Get A Grip*. He ministers via television and radio both locally and nationally. Rev. Bronner is happily married to the former Nina Cobb and is the proud father of four daughters and one son.

Rev. William Butler is a practicing pastoral psychotherapist at Parkside Pastoral Care Center at Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, Illinois, and at the Black Pastoral Care Center in Chicago, Illinois. He is also the director of Black Campus Ministries for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in the Chicago metropolitan area. He has earned a Master of Divinity from Chicago Theological Seminary and is completing a Doctorate of Ministry specializing in religion and psychology at Chicago Theological Seminary. He is an ordained United Church of Christ minister at Trinity United Church of Christ.

Pastor Donovan E. Case was educated in Jamaica and the U.S.A. After attending the City University of New York, Donovan engaged in several small businesses before entering the ministry. He served on many boards for Christian organizations and pioneered several churches and related ministries. For the past seventeen years, he has served as the President of International Christian Ministries of which he is a co-founder. Donovan and his wife, Carolyn, have been married for thirty-two years and have three married children. The Cases reside in the metropolitan St. Louis area.

Rev. Lawrence J. Clark graduated from City College of San Francisco and San Francisco State University. From there he went to Trinity Lutheran Seminary (Columbus, Ohio) and spent one of those years at the



Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta, where he graduated with a Masters of Divinity in 1996. He is currently enrolled in a Doctor of Ministry program at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago in mission and leadership and will graduate in 2003. He is married to the love of his life, Mrs. Darlene Cecea Gibson Clark, and they are the proud parents of a daughter, Jessica Imanee' Lee Clark.

Mr. Calvin Cochran graduated with a B.S. in Business Administration from the University of Tennessee Chattanooga. He joined the staff of Campus Outreach at the University of Montevallo after several years as the Assistant Men's Basketball coach there. In 1991, he became the Director and Co-Founder, with his wife, Andrea, of the Campus Outreach Montgomery ministry, focusing on African-American students. In 1996, Calvin began the development of the athletic ministry through being an Assistant Men's Basketball Coach at Alabama State University. In 2000, Calvin became the National Director of The Right Stuff Basketball Camp, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the inner city children of Birmingham, Alabama. Calvin married Andrea Jackson; they have three sons: Roosevelt Calvin III, Caleb Jackson, and Jonathan Calsohn.

Rev. Steven N. Dial, Sr., is the Youth and Student Pastor at Greenforest Community Baptist Church and a high school Bible teacher at the Greenforest/McCalep Christian Academic Center. He founded Planting Seeds Ministry and is the publisher of *Children Planting Seeds Family Daily Devotional*. He is also the author of *The Lessons of Life to Achieve Your Dreams for Today's Youth*, which has an interactive website at www.stevendial.com. Rev. Dial is married to the former Robin M. Strait, and they are the parents of two sons: Steven, Jr., and Micah, and the guardians of niece Janaya.

Rev. Floyd H. Flake is the Senior Pastor of the Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church in Jamaica Queens, New York, and President of Edison Charter Schools. He earned a Doctor of Ministry Degree (D. Min.) from United Theological Seminary and holds a B.A. from Wilberforce University. He recently authored *The Way of the Bootstrapper: Nine Action Steps for Achieving Your Dreams*, which made the *Los Angeles Times* and Waldenbooks Bestseller Lists. He is married to Dr. M. Elaine McCollins Flake, and they are the proud parents of four children.

Dr. Hozell C. Francis is a church-planting pastor, currently serving at New Vision Community Church in Los Angeles, California. He has been instrumental in planting several churches. His educational background includes the earned A.A., B.A., M. Div., and D. Min. degrees. His graduate and post-graduate work was completed at Biola University, Talbot School of Theology, in La Mirada, California. He is the author of *Church Planting in the African-American Context* (Zondervan, 1999) and has written several magazine articles. He is married to Lynda L. Francis; they have three teenage children.

Rev. Alvin R. Goodwin serves as the Director of Campus Ministry at the Wesley Foundation at Kentucky State University and as a contract chaplain


with the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Louisville, Kentucky. He has pastored several congregations in north Georgia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. He attended Fisk University and later received his B.S. in Music Education at Tennessee State University and his M. Div. in the area of Christian Education from Gammon Seminary at the Interdenominational Center. He has also received CPE training in the VA of Nashville and Emory University Affiliated Hospitals, and doctoral studies at United Theological Seminary. He has preached, lectured, and conducted revivals, workshops, retreats, and worship music throughout the U.S.A., Antigua, and Venezuela. His wife is also an ordained minister and pastor; they have three children.

Rev. Bernard Johnson is an ordained elder in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and has served in pastoral ministry for numerous years. He currently serves at the Stewart Memorial C.M.E. Church, Mobile, Alabama. He has served in campus ministry, holding the post of Chaplain, Talladega College, Talladega, Alabama, and several administrative positions. Rev. Johnson is an alumnus of Miles College, Fairfield, Alabama (B.S., Education); Phillips School of Theology, Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Georgia (M. Div.), and Union Theological Center, Dayton, Ohio (D.D., Honoris Cummunis). Reverend Johnson is married to the former Gloria J. Brown, and they are the proud parents of Jeremy, Jerrell, Deidre, Pearl, and Siyrra. Reverend and Mrs. Johnson are also extremely proud grandparents of one, Brittany Sharice.

Dr. Howard Jones began life as a jazz musician, but after meeting Christ, he turned these gifts over to the Lord for ministry purposes. He graduated from Nyack College in Nyack, New York in 1944, and was awarded the Honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree from Huntington College in Huntington, Tennessee, in 1970. He was the pastor of Bethany Church in Bronx, New York, and of Smoot Memorial Church in Cleveland, Ohio, both of which are Christian and Missionary Alliance churches. Pastor Jones and his wife, Wanda, had the unique privilege of living and ministering in Liberia as a part of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. He served as a crusade evangelist for many years and as the director of the Association's Famine Relief Program for Africa. In 1994 he was the first black American broadcaster to be elected to the National Religious Broadcasters Hall of Fame. He received the Pioneer Award as one of the founders of the Black National Religious Broadcasters in 1974. He is the author of several books, including *Shall We Overcome?*, *White Questions to a Black Christian*, *From the World of Jazz*, and *Heritage and Hope: The Future of the Black Family in America* (co-authored with his wife). He is currently working on his autobiography. He and Wanda have five children and six grandchildren and live in Oberlin, Ohio.

John P. Kee's newest release, *Not Guilty: The Experience*, features a musical gamut of styles, from the good old-fashioned church stuff to a hip-hop flavored remix of the title track. The title track—birthed from inside the walls of the Mecklenburg County Jail, where Kee spends an enormous amount of his time ministering—is reflective of a theme the 38 year old producer/artist has been building on in Double Oaks, a neighborhood





comprising some of Charlotte, North Carolina's toughest streets. "We've lit up that area," Kee reports. "That's where my church, The New Life Fellowship Center, is located. We have midnight basketball, as well as the East Coast Praise Connection, a Christian Nightclub that I opened—so the young people would have somewhere to go." It is all part of an outreach that has contributed to the gritty persona of the former drug-offender turned singer/preacher. He transformed the gospel community with his "new traditional" vocals and inspired a whole new generation of church youth. While dubbed the progressive pied piper, en route he has earned 3 Grammy nominations, 13 Stellar Music Awards, 2 Billboard Awards and 1 Soul Train Music Award. He has also amassed a string of hit albums including *We Walk By Faith*, *Wash Me*, *Stand*, *Strength*, and *Show Up*, which reached gold album sales.

Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu (Swahili for "dependable and cheerful") is a renowned educator. As president of African American Images (a communications company based in Chicago, Illinois), he is constantly on the lecture circuit, conducting over thirty different workshops addressing students, parents, teachers, community residents, and churches.

Dr. Alvin Lewis is the former Minister of Administration and Special Programs for the Vernon Park Church of God in Chicago, Illinois. Dr. Lewis earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Social Science from Kansas State University in 1960. In 1994, he earned his Master of Divinity degree from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary and another Master of Science degree from Kansas State University in 1970, with a concentration in human development. He earned his Ph.D. in 1975 from Kansas State University, with concentrations in adult education, family life education, leadership development, and adult education administration. Dr. Alvin Lewis has traveled and served as a conference and convention speaker. He has written several articles and held positions as staff writer for Christian Leadership magazine and staff writer and editor of Real Christianity magazine. He married Dr. Joanne L. Lewis and is the proud father of three young adults: Alvin Vaughn, Lydia Janese, and Lystrella Daneen.

Dr. Stanley B. Long is the founding pastor of South Bay Community Church in Fremont, California. South Bay Community Church was founded in 1986. He is co-chairman of the Board for the Urban Outreach Foundations. Dr. Long has been a member of the Board of Trustees at Fuller Theological Seminary since 1975; a member of the Editorial Board, *Leadership Journal*, *Christianity Today*, since 1979; a member of the Board of Directors, Tri-City Homeless Coalition from 1991–1994; and Adjunct Faculty, at both Fuller Theological Seminary (since 1993) and Patton College (since 1994). Dr. Long has been married to his wife, Ruby Pitts, for over forty years, and they have three children.

Pastor George M. Matthews, II, is Senior Pastor and Founder, New Life Interfaith Ministries, Inc., Bessemer, Alabama. He has pastored churches in the Pentecostal and Baptist denominations. He received a charge and commission from the Lord to begin instructing and building up the body

of Christ in the area of “the unity of the faith,” that unity which exists corporately in Christ. He believes the kingdom of God on earth is comprised of a conglomeration of all Christian faiths, and for this purpose, the church should emphasize its commonality in the Lord, rather than the lesser areas of doctrinal differences.

Rev. George O. McCalep was called to pastor Greenforest Community Baptist Church in Decatur, Georgia, in 1979. Under his leadership over the past twenty-one years, the congregation has grown from twenty-five members to over 6,000 active members with an average Sunday school attendance of 1,500. Pastor McCalep is a former athlete, owner/manager of a registered investment company, and a retired university professor. He recently accepted an adjunct professorship to teach Church Growth and Evangelism at Luther Rice Seminary in Atlanta. He is the author of six notable books, *Breaking the Huddle*, *Faith Over a Few Things*, *Growing Up to the Head*, *Stir Up the Gifts*, *Sin in the House*, and *Praising the Hell Out of Yourself*.


Mr. Brady Melton resides in Cincinnati, Ohio, and works as a project manager for a graphic design consultancy. He enjoys reading, bicycling, and golfing and is an active member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Entrepreneurship is in Brady’s blood, so his after-work energy is focused on building an internet-based shopping business. He attends Grace Church of Christ, a non-denominational congregation in Middletown, Ohio.

Mr. Derrick C. Moore is a former professional football player. He currently is on staff with Campus Outreach Ministries. He serves as the Campus Director at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, and is on the football coaching staff as well. He is also a Christian motivational speaker. He resides in Conyers, Georgia, with his wife Stephanie and their two daughters.

Rev. Dr. Hugh R. Page, Jr., is Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible at the University of Notre Dame and director of its African and African-American Studies Program. A priest in the Episcopal Church, he received his B.A. from Hampton Institute; M.Div. and S.T.M. from the General Theological Seminary (New York, New York); and M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard University. He has received many academic and professional honors including elevation to knighthood by both the Religious and Military Order of Knights of the Holy Sepulchre and the Association of Karadjordjevic Knights Bachelor in the Americas. His published works include *The Myth of Cosmic Rebellion: A Study of its Reflexes in Ugaritic and Biblical Literature* and (as editor) *Exploring New Paradigms in Biblical and Cognate Studies*.

Dr. William Pannell is Professor of Preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He currently serves as Special Assistant to the President at the Seminary. He is an author, lecturer, and preacher. He lives in Altadena, California, with his wife Hazel. They have two sons, two daughters-in-law, and one gorgeous granddaughter.





Dr. Franklin D. Perry, Sr., has a doctorate in education leadership. Currently, he is the principal at Clements Middle School, in Covington, Georgia. This former Chairman of the Board for Alabama A & M University, and a Lincoln-Mercury and Chrysler dealer, believes that there is no substitute for a good education. He is active in civic and professional organizations and is a member of Greenforest Baptist Church, in Decatur, Georgia. He and his wife, Shirley, have been married for thirty-four wonderful years and have two children and three grandchildren.

Dr. Freeman S. Rhoades is a native of Blackstone, Virginia. He is the Pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Tacoma, Washington, and the author of *Blacks In Every Book in the Bible*. He earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, after graduating from the School of Theology of Virginia Union University with a Master of Divinity degree. He has served on the faculties of Old Dominion University and Norfolk State University. His wife Anna, mother of his three children, is a schoolteacher.

Pastor Philip L. Rodman has served for eight years as the Senior Pastor of Refreshing Spring Church in Jefferson City, Missouri, and as the producer of Creative Arts Ministries Productions, a Christian-based film production company. He is the 1990 valedictorian graduate of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Illinois, with a Master's Degree in Pastoral Studies. Prior to assuming the pastorate of Refreshing Spring Church, Pastor Rodman served as the Senior Editor and Conference Director of Urban Ministries, Inc., a Christian education publishing company in Chicago. Pastor Rodman is married to Jerii Ellen Rodman, who serves with her husband as the co-pastor of the church and the director of Creative Arts Ministries Productions. The Rodmans have been married for thirteen years and have three children. They make their home in Jefferson City, Missouri. Pastor Rodman is currently writing a Christian novel that is due for publication in January 2002.

Rev. Paul Sadler is a pastor of Central Congregational United Church of Christ of New Orleans, Louisiana. He is the host and executive producer of a Christian talk show in New Orleans. He has served as a pastor and as a minister in several churches in Washington, D.C., and Chicago, Illinois. He earned a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Divinity from Howard University. He is married to Kim Sadler and has two children.

Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr., is the Senior Pastor of the Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, California. He also serves as Professor of Preaching and Christian Ministry at the American Baptist Seminary of the West, in Berkeley, California. For two years, he was one of *Ebony's* 100 Most Influential Black Americans and was among *Ebony's* Top 15 Greatest Black Preachers of 1993. He is a past president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC) and the American Baptist Churches of the West (ABCW). He is married to JoAnna Goodwin Smith, and has three sons, two daughters, fourteen grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Wanaume Kwa Sala is a “cell group” of African-American Christian men that have been meeting on the first and third Saturday of each month since 1992. The name of the group comes from the Swahili translation of “Men of Prayer.” There are fourteen members, ranging in age from the mid-thirties to the mid-fifties. All of the members live in Chicago.

Rev. Michael T. Westbrook is entering his twentieth year of ministry. He currently serves as Vice President of Multi-Cultural & Urban Ministry for Young Life. With a call from God to rebuild and restore urban communities, Rev. Westbrook and his wife founded the Young Life Community Outreach Center in Newark, New Jersey, and the Gateway Pregnancy Center in Irvington, New Jersey, and are currently involved in planting the Greater Life Christian Fellowship Church in Newark, New Jersey. In addition, he was a contributing author for the book, *Planting Seeds of Hope*, and has been a recipient of many honors and awards, including Who’s Who Amongst American Christian Leaders. He resides in Newark, New Jersey, and has been married to the Rev. Maria A. Westbrook for sixteen years.

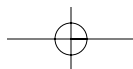
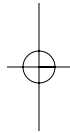
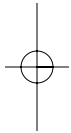
Rev. Dr. Henry M. Williamson, Sr., received a B.A. in sociology from Purdue University, a Master of Divinity from Garrett Theological Seminary, Northwestern University, with an advanced degree in clinical pastoral education. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from United Theological Seminary. He is in his thirtieth year of pastoral service in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, having pastored churches in Indiana, Illinois, and Florida before becoming pastor of Carter Temple CME Church in Chicago, Illinois. He established More Like Christ, a program for the homeless, and several other ministries: Boys to Men Choir, Christian Methodist Men, Man/Boy Breakfast Mentoring Program, the Sisterhood (a female development and mentoring program), scholarship programs, and television ministries that take Christ and social issues to the community. He is the founder and CEO of One Church One School Community Partnership Program. He has received numerous awards, including the 2001 Keeper of the Dream, 2000 Lyle Star Award for Exemplary Community Service, People Who Make a Difference, Pastor of the New Generation, PUSH Dream Keepers Award, and the Black Expo Award for Community Leadership, among others. He serves on the boards of Northern Trust Bank, Rainbow/PUSH, and Radio Broadcast Ministers of Chicago. He and his wife of twenty-six years, the former Doris Yvonne Keys, are the proud parents of Henry, Jr. and Kelli Daonne, and grandparents of Jonathon.

Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He attended Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. After six years in the military, he transferred to Howard University, where he completed his undergraduate studies and received his first Master’s Degree. His second Master’s Degree was from the University of Chicago Divinity School. His Doctorate was received from the United Theological Seminary. He has been the recipient of three honorary Doctor of Divinity Degrees, a Doctor of Letters degree (from Colgate University), and a Doctor of Laws Degree from Bethune Cookman College.



He was called to serve the congregation of Trinity United Church of Christ in March of 1972. Over the years, the church has grown to eight thousand members, has built two worship centers and two senior citizen housing complexes, has operated a federally-funded child care program for low-income and unemployed families, and has run a federally-funded credit union for twenty-five years. He is married to Ramah Reed Wright, and they have four daughters, a son, and three grandchildren.

Dr. LeRoy L. Yates, Sr., is the Senior Pastor of the Westlawn Gospel Chapel in Chicago, Illinois. He earned his Bachelor of Science and Master degrees from Chicago State University. He received an Honorary Doctorate (Humanities) from Urban Bible School in Detroit, Michigan. He was formerly a microbiologist with the Chicago Medical School for approximately fifteen years. He currently serves as a professional family therapist at Westside Holistic Family Services. Dr. Yates has conducted numerous seminary workshops and has written several publications dealing with Christian counseling issues. Dr. Yates is the co-founder of Circle Y Youth Camp in Banger, Michigan, and also served as the Executive Director. Dr. and Mrs. Yates have been married for forty-seven years and have five children and ten grandchildren.





features INDEX

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